

Holden Municipal Light Department Holds Battery Ribbon Cutting

Holden Municipal Light Department's (HMLD) new energy storage project is officially online. The department and, energy storage project developer, owner and operator, Lightshift Energy, hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the completion of Lightshift's newest battery storage project in Holden, Massachusetts, which will serve HMLD and its customers.

Developed in partnership with MMWEC, the 5-megawatt (MW)/22 megawatt-hour (MWh) battery project will charge during low-cost periods of low energy demand, and discharge during higher-cost peak demand periods. This peak-shaving approach enables significant energy savings and environmental benefits for HMLD customers.



*Rep. Ferguson and
Sen. Durant*

In recognition of the project's commencement of operations, the event included an on-site press conference featuring Massachusetts Undersecretary of Energy Michael Judge, State Representative Kimberly Ferguson, State Senator Peter Durant, town elected officials and others.

This project is a result of a first-of-its-kind program by Lightshift and MMWEC, deployed in May 2024, to bring energy storage systems to several of the joint action agency's member utilities. Holden marks the first project commencing operations within the program, which Lightshift estimates will provide more than \$200 million in energy savings across Massachusetts.

"Massachusetts municipal light plants have been leaders in energy storage and peak demand management for the past decade," says Jason Viadero, MMWEC's Director of Energy Assets.

"HMLD's battery project is the first step of many in MMWEC and LightShift's partnership that leverages energy storage technology into cost savings for municipal light plants and their customers while supporting the state's climate goals."

The program also includes projects already underway in the towns of Groton and Paxton, with mid-stage development activities moving forward in several other communities. ∞



HMLD ribbon cutting

Avangrid's New England Wind I Among State's Offshore Wind Selections

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as part of a multi-state solicitation, has awarded sustainable energy company Avangrid's New England Wind I 791 megawatts (MW) as part of the latest offshore wind solicitation. MMWEC has partnered with Avangrid for an option to purchase up to 50 MW of the project's entitlements on behalf of participating municipal light departments.

New England Wind I, located roughly 30 miles south of Barnstable, MA and bordering Vineyard Wind I, the nation's first large-scale offshore wind project currently under construction, is part of more than 2,800 MW selected in the solicitation by Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The offshore wind developers whose projects were selected in this solicitation will be negotiating contracts with the electric distribution companies, with paperwork expected to be filed with the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities in November.

New England Wind I has all major permits secured. If a power purchase agreement is signed and approved, construction can begin next year. It is expected to reach full commercial operation in 2029.

MMWEC and Avangrid earlier negotiated an agreement for the option for the municipal light plants (MLPs) to participate in the

solicitation as part of MMWEC's and the MLPs' efforts to align with the Commonwealth's decarbonization goals, and meet or exceed the MLP Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standard. In the bid award, the Commonwealth has instructed Avangrid to engage in a negotiation with MMWEC for 50 MW of entitlements from the project.

New England Wind I will produce enough electricity to power approximately 400,00 homes, and will reduce greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to taking 300,000 gasoline-based cars off the road annually. It is expected to create more than 4,400 full-time equivalent jobs and bring \$3 billion of local investment, including a new marshalling port in Salem and a new offshore wind manufacturing facility in New Bedford.

In addition to the New England Wind I project, Massachusetts selected 1,087 MW of the 1,287 SouthCoast Wind multi-state project, and up to 800 MW of the 1,200 MW Vineyard Wind 2 project. All three projects intend to utilize Project Labor Agreements. In addition, all of New England's purpose-built offshore wind ports in New England – in New Bedford, New London, Salem and Providence Port – will have tenants through 2032 as part of this selection, according to Governor Maura Healey's office. ∞

BMLD Manager Mark Barakian Wins APPA Seven Hats Award

Boylston Municipal Light Department (BMLD) General Manager has been recognized as an outstanding public power leader by the American Public Power Association (APPA).

Barakian was one of five public power managers nationwide awarded the Larry Hobart Seven Hats award this year. The Seven Hats award recognizes managers of utilities with fewer than 2,500 electric meters, who lead the way in seven areas — planning and design, administration, public relations, field supervision, accounting, human resources, and community involvement. Barakian received the award at the APPA national conference in June.

Barakian's public power career spans over three decades. He began working at BMLD in 1990 as a lineman and worked his way up to foreman and eventually general manager. Barakian has been proactive and forward-thinking in the design and construction of a resilient and overbuilt distribution system. This has culminated in major development of commercial and industrial customers in what otherwise is a small and relatively rural system. With his field work background, Barakian often assists light department technicians when needed. Keeping the safety of his staff at the forefront, Barakian's leadership has led to the department winning the APPA Safety Award of Excellence an impressive 21 times.

As a hands-on manager, Barakian goes above and beyond in the Boylston community by working with other municipal offices on collaboration opportunities and lending a hand whenever needed, from ensuring a community antique engine/tractor fundraiser has the electricity it needs to assisting with the town's holiday tree lighting.

Barakian is well respected by his BMLD peers and fellow light



Barakian's award announced at the APPA conference

department managers. BMLD employees describe him as easily approachable and willing to listen to feedback. Paxton Municipal Light Department General Manager Tara Rondeau has the unique position of knowing Barakian as both a fellow light department manager and the manager of the town in which she resides.

"Mark has been able to withstand rapid commercial growth in town while keeping rates low," Rondeau says. "As a ten-year resident of Boylston, I have never experienced a power outage in town. Mark

leads a great team which prides itself on ensuring that the light department provides superior service at a low cost."

Through Barakian's leadership, BMLD has maintained rates that are 50 percent lower than the state's investor-owned utilities.

While Barakian is deeply involved in the Boylston community, he is also quick to lend help to other light departments and larger public power projects, including the APPA's Light Up Navajo initiative and regional mutual aid during the aftermath of storms. Barakian credits his ability to wear all the hats to his small yet exceptional staff of six employees.

"The most important key to balancing all the responsibilities is having qualified and caring staff that you can rely on to handle some of the lesser issues," Barakian says. "This allows you to focus on the higher priorities as needed." Barakian added he was both surprised and honored to win the award.

"It made me look back over the past 30+ years working in Boylston," Barakian says. "The department has accomplished many system upgrades and overcome several devastating storms during this time. Being part of such a great organization and receiving this award is the biggest highlight of my career."∞

WBMLP and IELD Receive Municipal Fiber Grants

Two MMWEC Members have been awarded municipal fiber grants through Governor Maura Healey and Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll's office. West Boylston Municipal Light Plant (WBMLP) and Ipswich Electric Light Department (IELD) received the awards for fiscal year 2024.

WBMLP received a \$151,131 grant to connect various municipal facilities to the existing municipal fiber network. The department previously installed 15 miles of aerial backbone fiber throughout the town. The backbone fiber enters four municipal buildings including the Town Hall, Police Department, Fire Department, and WBMLP's headquarters. This existing fiber is primarily used to interconnect to the Regional Emergency Communications Center.

The new grant will allow WBMLP to install fiber service at the Department of Public Works, library, schools, Senior Center, and the WBMLP Substation. The project will interconnect all nine public buildings utilizing an existing municipal light plant (MLP) fiber backbone and operate a secure, reliable, and cost-

effective fiber-based data and communications network that will provide bulk voice, data, and internet to its buildings.

WBMLP currently receives 1 gigabyte of internet data service to its existing head-end infrastructure from two different sources: Shrewsbury Electric and Cable Operations and the town of Sterling's MLP, Local Area Municipal Broadband.

"Interconnecting to the MLP-owned and controlled fiber backbone will ensure all municipal buildings receive cost effective, higher quality, and highly redundant data, voice and cable services from the ratepayer owned, not-for-profit MLPs in Shrewsbury and Sterling," WBMLP General Manager Jonathan Fitch says. "Having local control also ensures that service upgrades and restorations are prioritized, and the quality of services are paramount over profit."

IELD was awarded a \$250,000 grant to close the existing fiber loop in town. The department also received a \$250,000 Municipal Fiber Grant in fiscal year 2022 for the replacement of its existing fiber infrastructure. ∞

Barry Tupper Elected to APPA Board of Directors

Barry Tupper, general manager of Holden Municipal Light Department, has been elected to the American Public Power Association (APPA) Board of Directors.

APPA is the voice of not-for-profit, community-owned utilities that power 2,000 towns and cities nationwide. APPA represents public power before the federal government to protect the interests of the more than 54 million people that public power utilities serve, and the 96,000 people they employ. The association advocates and advises on electricity policy, technology, trends, training, and operations.

The APPA Board of Directors is split up into representatives of 10 different regions across the country. Tupper is one of two directors representing region 8: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont.

Tupper is no stranger to serving on public power boards and committees. He currently serves as a member of the Northeast Public Power Association (NEPPA) Board of Directors, Executive Committee, Mutual Aid Committee, Conference Oversight & Planning Committee, Education and Development Committee, and as chair for its Engineering & Operations Subcommittee. He also serves on the APPA Mutual Aid



Barry Tupper

Committee.

The idea of representing smaller municipal light departments on the APPA Board of Directors is what Tupper says drew him to pursue the new position.

"I wanted to share valuable insights from our community on a national stage while ensuring that the interests of small and medium-sized public power utilities are well-represented," Tupper says. "I knew that this role would involve working closely with other board members to guide APPA's strategic initiatives and advocate for policies that benefit public power utilities and their customers across the country."

He also is eager to work with his fellow public power peers in this new role.

"I look forward to collaborating with fellow public power leaders to advance our industry's goals," Tupper says. "This opportunity will allow me to contribute to the broader public power community while bringing back innovative ideas and practices to Holden."

Tupper was elected to serve a one-year term on the APPA Board of Directors at the APPA annual business meeting in June. Tupper says next June, he plans to seek a new three-year term. ∞

SELCO Installs New EV Charging Station Dedicated to Longtime Employee

Shrewsbury Electric and Cable Operations (SELCO) has installed its fifth charging station in town and has dedicated it to recently retired longtime SELCO employee Ralph Iaccarino.

The new charging station is located at Dean Park on 805 Main Street in Shrewsbury. The station features two Level 2 chargers, each containing two charging ports, at two different locations in the park. It is named the Iaccarino Station in honor of Ralph.

"When SELCO was planning EV charging station locations in 2021, Ralph identified this location as a good spot due to ample parking space, and most importantly proximity to the softball field where he played for the SELCO softball team," SELCO Integrated Resource Analyst Patrick Collins says.

The Iaccarino charging station was made possible by a \$7,500 Green Communities grant. In addition to the Dean Park location, SELCO has charging stations at the Town Hall (16 ports), Shrewsbury High School (four ports), Parker Road (four ports), and Walter J. Paton Elementary School (four ports). The department is also planning a four-port station at Oak Middle School.

SELCO's dedication to electrification also extends to its fleet. The department owns six electric vehicles including two Ford Mustang Mach-Es for marketing, general use, and meter reading and four Ford Lightning electric trucks for foreman/manager operations and interoffice deliveries. Collins says Iaccarino spearheaded the efforts to electrify SELCO's fleet.

"Ralph was an essential team member and supporter in SELCO's public EV charging station deployment and fleet electrification," Collins says. "Ralph became an enthusiastic EV user due to its cost effectiveness, superior technology, improved comfort, and reduced environmental impact."

Iaccarino retired from SELCO in January 2024 after an impressive 50-year career in the electrical engineering sector, with 35 of those years working in the public power industry. He joined SELCO in 1974 as an engineering technician. His passion and expertise paved the way to various leadership roles including Manager of Engineering, Manager of Engineering and Operations, and finally Director of the division in 2021. As a resident of Shrewsbury, Iaccarino is also committed to the local community.

"I've known Ralph for more than 30 years, and based on his dedication to the public power community, no one is more deserving," says MMWEC CEO Ronald C. DeCurzio.

Collins says when it came to naming the Iaccarino station, the choice was simple.

"Ralph dedicated himself to serving the community through his work at SELCO, so it was only fitting to dedicate a community asset to him," Collins says. ∞



SELCO employees at the Iaccarino Station. Photo Credit: SELCO.

MMWEC Promotes Agrivoltaics, Brings Sheep to Solar Project

When driving past MMWEC's seven-megawatt solar project this summer and fall, drivers may see more than just solar panels. MMWEC has partnered with Solar Shepherd, a Mansfield-based solar farming company, to bring sheep to the MMWEC/Master Sergeant Alexander Cotton Memorial Solar to help trim vegetation around the solar panels.

The MMWEC solar project reached commercial operation in March 2024. Six MMWEC member MLPs participate in the project, located in Boylston, Ipswich, Mansfield, Marblehead, Peabody and Wakefield. The project is expected to generate more than 13,800 megawatt hours (MWh) per year, enough to power over 1,500 homes, and displace nearly 13,220,400 lbs of CO2 emissions from Massachusetts power plants per year.

Solar Shepherd was founded in 2018 by sheep farmer Daniel Finnegan, who was looking to expand his farm. That year, he began working with solar project owners to utilize his flocks to graze around the panels. Since 2018, Solar Shepherd's flocks have grazed nearly 800 acres of solar across Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and New York. Solar sites the sheep have visited range from as small as one acre to as large as 50 acres. The sheep have also travelled to non-solar sites that need vegetation control, including colleges and municipalities. The business currently manages more than 250 sheep of four different breeds.

The process of using land for both solar energy and agricultural



Solar Shepherd sheep and herding dog at the MMWEC solar project

uses is called agrivoltaics, which can include growing crops around the panels, planting pollinator-friendly plants, or allowing livestock to graze in the solar fields.

According to Finnegan, using sheep to control vegetation provides many benefits to solar fields as opposed to using traditional mowing equipment. They move gently and quietly across the solar site, continuously controlling the growth of grasses and other vegetation on-site. As the sheep graze, they return all the nutrients to the soil, improving its health. The sheep help desirable plants and grasses develop deeper root systems than the invasive species that sometimes take over solar sites. Deeper root systems stabilize the soil to protect arrays from erosion. The flocks also help retain more moisture in the soil, which leads to cooler panels and increased solar output.

Finnegan says the most rewarding aspect of his job is seeing the impact his flocks leave.

"I love the impact we have on our clients' sites," Finnegan says. "It's satisfying to see these solar sites beautifully maintained by sheep and really enjoyable to see how the sheep improve the ground on solar sites."

Solar Shepherd brought a small flock of 27 sheep to the MMWEC solar site in August and is planning to switch them out with a larger flock of 100 sheep in September. The sheep are expected to remain on-site until mid-October. ∞

Great River Hydro Facility Toured



MMWEC Members and staff had the opportunity in August to tour Great River Hydro's Moore Station, the largest conventional hydropower facility in New England.

IELD Manager Recognized for Inclusive Utility Investments Efforts



IELD Manager Dylan Lewellyn (center) receives the NEPPA Special Recognition Award at the NEPPA Annual Conference