



FERC Approves ISO-NE's Proposal to Delay Forward Capacity Auction

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has issued a “letter order” approving a proposal from ISO New England (ISO-NE) to delay by one year the 19th Forward Capacity Auction (FCA). In so doing, FERC cites specific comments submitted by the “public systems” coalition of MMWEC, the Connecticut Municipal Electric Energy Cooperative (CMEEC) Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA) and the New Hampshire Electric Co-Op (NHEC) in support of the delay.

ISO-NE, joined by the New England Power Pool (NEPOOL) Participants Committee, of which MMWEC is an active participant, proposed the tariff changes to delay the auction which procures capacity for the June 2028 to June 2029 delivery year, or capacity commitment period. The filing would merely delay the auction from February 2025 to February 2026.

In its letter order, FERC noted that “Public Systems believes that the filing is an important step in moving New England forward toward a capacity market design that better reflects each resource’s contribution to ensuring regional resource adequacy.” The focus of the requested delay is to complete work on a revised resource accreditation mechanism.

Delaying FCA 19 for a year will afford the region the time necessary to complete the on-going work on a new

methodology in the Forward Capacity Market (FCM) for calculating resource capacity accreditation values, so that this methodology can be implemented for use in FCA 19. The New England region is experiencing a transformation in its resource mix, as federal and state policies promote the development of clean energy resources that will support a significant expected increase in demand over the next decade. To ensure that this transition takes place in a manner that meets New England’s resource adequacy needs, it is imperative that the region accurately value the reliability contributions of all resources, using a methodology that “accounts for the variable nature of loss-of-load events and measures capacity value for each resource in a common manner.” The current methodology falls short of meeting these criteria, and in recognition of this, the ISO, the New England stakeholders, and the New England states, have been engaged in a multi-year project to overhaul the FCM’s capacity accreditation methodology.

Through the end of the decade, battery storage resources, solar resources, and offshore wind resources will comprise the vast majority of the proposed projects in New England’s interconnection queue. The region is also poised to experience a significant increase in

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ISO Agrees to Plans for Prompt, Seasonal Markets; MMWEC Advocated for Changes

ISO New England’s Board of Directors has concurred with ISO management’s recommendation to transition New England’s Forward Capacity Market (FCM) to a “prompt, seasonal” market structure. MMWEC and its public power colleagues from the region have long advocated for this change. Capacity is currently procured through the FCM as a year-round product, for a commitment period of three years in the future. A “prompt” market design will procure capacity much closer to the time when it is needed. A seasonal market will purchase capacity consistent with New England’s unique seasonal needs.

The design changes are intended to promote regional reliability, as they should produce more efficient and effective capacity price signals, allowing capacity prices to incentivize action to boost winter reliability. Procuring capacity seasonally will support more accurate capacity accreditation that reflects real seasonal differences in resources’ reliability contributions. And the shift to a prompt market should enable generators to offer capacity at prices that better reflect the cost and risks of contracting for the optimal amount of fuel. It may also better facilitate the market entry of non-gas resources, thereby diversifying the resource mix and improving winter reliability.

The announcement that ISO will pursue these changes follows

years of advocacy efforts. MMWEC, aided by its public power partners—Connecticut Municipal Electric Energy Cooperative, New Hampshire Electric Cooperative, Inc., and the Vermont Public Power Supply Authority—have long urged the adoption of these reforms before the New England Power Pool (NEPOOL) stakeholder process and in Washington, DC, before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The FERC activities have included participation in the Commission’s two, New England-specific “Winter-Gas Electric Forums.” The first was held in Burlington, VT in September 2022, and the second was held in Portland, Maine in June 2023. MMWEC attended both conferences, and MMWEC and its public power allies provided extensive written comments to FERC that included urging pursuit of the design changes that the ISO has now announced an intention to implement.

The eventual details of these changes will be developed and deliberated over the coming months in the NEPOOL stakeholder process. MMWEC expects another FERC filing will occur to further delay FCA 19 to provide more time to work out the details of these reforms. ISO’s decision to advance to a prompt seasonal capacity market design is an especially significant milestone. ∞

James Lisowski Retires after 34 years at CEL

After working more than 34 years in the public power sector, James Lisowski, general manager of Chicopee Electric Light (CEL), has retired.

While earning his B.S. in Electrical Engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), Lisowski interned at Western Mass Electric during his sophomore and junior years, which introduced him to the electric utility field and piqued his interest and curiosity about the industry. After graduating from RPI in 1989, he started working at CEL, located in his hometown of Chicopee, as an electrical engineer.

During his more than 34 years at CEL, Lisowski worked his way up to many positions including electrical/distribution engineer, engineering and station supervisor, engineering and operations manager, and assistant manager. In 2021, he became general manager at CEL, a position he held until his retirement in January 2024.

Throughout his tenure at CEL, Lisowski worked on several major projects. The beginning of his career was dedicated to the complete system-wide reconstruction of CEL's distribution system. After that was completed, Lisowski oversaw the construction of two 115 kilovolt distribution substations. Following the substation construction, Lisowski worked on the rollout of CEL's advanced metering infrastructure system and then Crossroads Fiber, CEL's fiber optic internet service that currently serves 4,300 customers.

Lisowski says he spent the most recent part of his career



MMWEC CEO Ron DeCurzio with James Lisowski at his retirement party at CEL

preparing CEL for the future.

"I worked on positioning the utility to move forward as they work towards the state's decarbonization goals," Lisowski says. "I believe I left them in a good position in terms of achieving those goals."

Looking back at his time at CEL, Lisowski says he enjoyed the fast-paced nature of his job, doing field work versus office work, and making connections with other public power professionals. But what he most enjoyed were the people with whom he worked on a day-to-day basis.

"The people here are easy to work with and one of the main reasons I stayed on for so long," Lisowski says. "It takes the whole team for CEL to be successful from the higher ups to those most visible to customers."

Lisowski had a similar sentiment when asked what advice he would give to his successor, Daniel Faille.

"Trust your people," Lisowski says. "Hire good people and allow them to do their jobs without micromanaging them."

CEL HR/Administration Manager Natalie Colberg says Lisowski will be missed at CEL.

"It was an honor and a privilege to work with Jim for over 25 years," Colberg says. "He was a true professional, with a vast array of knowledge in all subjects related not only specifically to CEL, but also the electric utility industry. His dedication, professionalism, and experience will definitely be missed."

As for Lisowski's retirement plans, he will continue to consult for CEL on its fiber network for the next two years and then he plans to resume playing golf. ∞

NextZero Adds New Appliance Rebates

NextZero customers now have even more opportunities to save on efficient appliances. The decarbonization program now includes three new appliance rebates.

The NextZero Appliance Rebate program is expanding to include three new appliances. Customers are now eligible for \$40 rebates on ENERGY STAR®-certified room air conditioners. The program also added a \$75 rebate for ENERGY STAR-certified all-in-one clothes washers and dryers and a \$500 rebate for ENERGY STAR-certified all-in-one washers and heat pump dryers.

"The updates to our 2024 NextZero rebate offerings and incentive levels are reflective of MMWEC's efforts to ensure that our programs are accurately supporting both decarbonization



and energy efficiency levels, while not excluding those energy efficiency measures that lower income households are able to take advantage of," says MMWEC Sustainable Energy Program & Policy Senior Manager Zoe Eckert.

Appliances must be purchased new to be eligible for NextZero Appliance program rebates. One rebate for each appliance/device is permitted every three years, except for Wi-Fi thermostat rebates, which are permitted annually.

NextZero rebate amounts and offerings may vary depending on the municipal light department. To see light department offerings, visit www.NextZero.org and select the light department from the dropdown menu. ∞

WMGLD Launches Community Solar Project

For Wakefield Municipal Gas & Light Department (WMGLD) customers, benefiting from solar energy just got easier thanks to the department's new Kenneth Chase Community Solar Program.

Named after longtime, recently retired, WMGLD commissioner Kenneth Chase, the Community Solar Program is an opportunity for WMGLD customers to benefit from solar energy without having to install panels on their own homes. Atop WMGLD's headquarters on 480 North Avenue is a 225 kilowatt direct current (kWdc) solar installation. The installation is owned and operated by WMGLD and the light department has reserved 125 kWdc of the installation for its Community Solar Program. The program is ideal for customers who are interested in solar energy but may not have a roof appropriate for solar or are unable to make the large capital investment in their homes.

To participate, WMGLD customers pay a one-time membership fee of \$75 per kW and an additional monthly fee of \$11 per kW. In exchange, the customer will receive a bill credit based on how many kilowatt-hours (kWh) of solar were produced by the customer's share of the solar program. Customers will receive 85% of the current WMGLD energy charge per kWh produced that month. Customers can sign up for between one and five kWdc of the solar project and are



WMGLD representatives with Environmental Sustainability Committee members at the solar presentation.

expected to have a payback of less than five years.

The department also considered low-income customers when developing this program. Twenty five percent of the 125 kWdc, which equates to 32 kWdc, is reserved for low-income customers. Low-income customers have the initial \$75 membership fee waived, as well as a reduced monthly fee of \$10.50 per kW.

Customers must show proof of financial hardship to enroll such as Low Income Home Energy Assistance acceptance.

WMGLD held its first Community Solar Program informational session in January which attracted more than 80 interested customers and yielded 20 sign ups by the next morning. Due to the popularity of the first session, WMGLD held an additional session via Zoom in February.

"WMGLD wanted to make this solar project a winner for the department, the town, and for our customers," said WMGLD Energy Services Business Analyst Joseph Collins. "It allows an opportunity to many customers to support and invest in renewable energy without a large barrier to entry such as a significant capital investment."

Enrollment for the Community Solar Program is open until March 1, 2024 with the goal of launching the program officially on April 1, 2024. ∞

Chicopee Electric Light Joins Connected Homes

Chicopee Electric Light (CEL) customers who own smart devices now have even more opportunity to save. CEL has joined Connected Homes, the innovative residential demand response program offered by NextZero. Connected Homes allows residential customers to better manage Wi-Fi-connected devices in their homes while reducing their carbon footprint.

Connected Homes, launched in April 2020 with 11 municipal light plants (MLPs), is offered through MMWEC's electrification and decarbonization program, NextZero. Connected Homes allows customers of the participating MLPs to leverage the technology of smart devices into energy and cost savings for the light department and its customers.

By enrolling a smart device in the Connected Homes program, customers agree to allow their light department to make brief, limited adjustments to their devices during times of peak electric demand, such as temporarily powering off an electric vehicle during peak hours. Customers are informed of possible adjustments in advance via email or text message and given the choice to opt out of each adjustment. Customers who participate are given a stipend or bill credit.

CEL joins 13 other MLPs currently participating in

Connected Homes. The other light departments in the program include those in Belmont, Holden, Holyoke, Ipswich, Mansfield, Marblehead, Peabody, Princeton, Shrewsbury, South Hadley, Sterling, Wakefield, and West Boylston.

Specific brands and models of thermostats, home batteries, electric vehicle chargers, electric hot water heaters, and mini-split controllers are eligible for incentives under the Connected Homes program.

"Connected Homes is a fantastic way for customers to help their local light department take control of the cost of energy and keep MLP rates low," said MMWEC Sustainable Energy Program & Policy Senior Manager Zoe Eckert. "The MMWEC team is excited to launch Connected Homes to Chicopee residents with CEL."

"By joining Connected Homes, CEL is able to empower our customers to leverage their own smart devices, further enhancing their investment," said CEL General Manager Daniel Faille. "This collaboration enables customers to actively participate in optimizing their energy usage, alleviating strain on the grid, and bolstering the resilience of our electrical system."

For more information on Connected Homes, visit www.NextZero.org. ∞

Fitch Ratings Affirms Berkshire Wind Project Bonds

Fitch Ratings, one of the three nationally recognized credit rating agencies, has affirmed its AA- rating on bonds associated with the Berkshire Wind Power Project.

Fitch affirmed the rating on \$31.3 million wind project revenue bonds series 2, which are classified as “Green Bonds.” Fitch also stated that the Rating Outlook is “Stable.” Green Bonds are specifically designated to finance environmentally-friendly projects.

The AA- rating largely reflects the credit quality of the utilities participating in Phase One of the Berkshire Wind Power Cooperative Corporation (BWPC), a 10-turbine, 15-megawatt (MW) project, located along the ridgeline of Brodie Mountain in the communities of Hancock and Lanesborough, Mass. Phase One of the project is owned by 14 municipal utility participants, and MMWEC. MMWEC operates the project, along with Phase Two, which consists of two additional turbines totaling 4.6 MW.

Payments from the project participants are ultimately used to pay operating expenses and debt service on the series 2 bonds. Payments from the project participants are made pursuant to identical take-or-pay power purchase agreements with MMWEC,

while corresponding payments from MMWEC to BWPC are made pursuant to a separate power sales contract. The obligations of the purchasers to MMWEC, and MMWEC’s corresponding obligation to BWPC, are absolute.

The very strong credit quality of the project participants, particularly the largest, is supported by their monopolistic utility operations, autonomous rate making authority, low operating costs and very low financial leverage, according to Fitch. The purchaser credit quality is determined by Fitch’s evaluation of the aggregate credit quality of the project participants, and is capped by the credit quality of the light departments with the largest entitlements, which include the municipal utilities located in Peabody, Shrewsbury, Wakefield, Holden, Marblehead and Ipswich.

Fitch also identifies the operating risk as “A,” stating that BWPC’s operating risk assessment is low. Berkshire Wind Phase One participants also include the utilities located in Ashburnham, Boylston, Groton, Hull, Paxton, Sterling, Templeton, and West Boylston. ∞

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winter energy demand. The current methodology for accrediting resource contributions to resource adequacy is insufficient in the face of these changes. Of particular concern, the accreditation methodology must be updated to capture the impact of the constrained natural gas delivery system on the ability of natural gas-fired resources to deliver energy during the winter, when those constraints are greatest. It also must accurately capture resource performance during extended, multi-hour reliability events, so that the region attracts a mix of resources that is best able to serve load over the course of those events in a cost-efficient manner.

In addition, the extension will allow for consideration of even more fundamental changes to the FCM design, including a prompt capacity market design, in which “auctions would be held close in time to the delivery period,” and a structure focused on the procurement of “seasonal capacity products (e.g., winter and summer).” A market design that procures capacity closer to the time it is needed and is configured for New England’s unique seasonal needs and infrastructure limitations should produce more efficient and effective capacity price signals, allowing capacity prices to incentivize action to boost winter reliability.

Following the FERC letter order approving the one-year delay, ISO-NE proposed an additional two-year delay to enable the development of further market changes, including the development of a prompt, seasonal market. ∞

MMWEC Promotes Pipeline Safety

MMWEC’s Jason Viadero, director of Engineering and Generation Assets, presented at the annual Gas Pipeline Safety Awareness event held at the Ludlow Senior Center. He was joined by Ray Gouley of the R.F. Gouley Company, who presented on electrical safety.



MMWEC’s Jason Viadero (left) with Ray Gouley of the R.F. Gouley Company (right) at the Ludlow Senior Center



Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company

MMWEC

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Joint Action and economies of scale for Massachusetts municipal utilities