MMWEC Public Energy Partners
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Public Power

Joint *Action* News

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Meeting the needs of Massachusetts municipal utilities since 1969

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MMWEC Members Save $3.8M in 2024, $33.8M Overall from Peak Forecasting

MMWEC Member savings through the Peak Forecasting and Remote Dispatching program continues to grow. In 2024, MMWEC Members and participating municipal light plants (MLPs) saved more than $3.8 million in avoided transmission costs and energy arbitrage.

Since fall 2016, MMWEC has offered peak forecasting services to its Members, alerting them when potential energy peaks will occur. MMWEC has also offered remote dispatching services, in which MMWEC analysts remotely dispatch participating MLPs' distributed energy resources (DERs), including utility-scale batteries, to operate during peak hours since October 2017. MLP electricity, transmission, and capacity costs are all impacted by peak energy usage, so running these "behind-the-meter" DERs during peak hours reduces costs for the MLPs and their customers.

MMWEC can remotely dispatch a combined 21.2 megawatts (MW) of DERs and batteries to respond to potential peaks. MMWEC also provides dispatch instructions to an additional 15.5 MW of DERs split among three MLP systems which operate their units locally. The five remotely dispatchable batteries are located in Sterling, Ashburnham, Wakefield, and Templeton. Four of the remotely dispatchable DERs belong to two Member systems, and two DERs belong to non-MMWEC systems. During the summer when the capacity peak is most likely to occur, MMWEC also dispatches temporary DERs for participating Member systems.

MMWEC strives to predict and call the monthly transmission peaks as well as the ISO New England (ISO-NE) capacity peak. The transmission and ISO-NE system peaks often align, but can also differ since transmission territories cover different portions of New England. In 2024, MMWEC successfully called the Eversource peaks 100% of the time and the National Grid peaks 92% of the time. While the official 2024 ISO-NE peak will be confirmed later this year, MMWEC likely captured the capacity peak as well.

From 2017 through 2022, MMWEC's Peak Forecasting and Remote Dispatching program has saved Members and participating light departments $33.8 million in avoided energy, transmission, and capacity costs. As more behind-the-meter resources, such as energy storage and solar, are added to the ISO-NE grid, predicting peaks becomes more challenging. MMWEC's Lead Portfolio Analyst Jeffrey Bourgoin and the analyst team are adapting processes to ensure continued success.

"Peak energy demand across different regions of New England will likely become less correlated as behind-the-meter resources become more prevalent," Bourgoin says. "We are actively working on improving our peak prediction methodology to better detect signs of when these different regions of New England are more likely to peak."∞

NextZero Moves Rebate Processing In-House

NextZero customers now receive enhanced customer service and quicker rebate application and payment turnaround times thanks to the department's new in-house rebate processing system.

After several years of using an external contractor to facilitate the NextZero rebates, the program decided to take control into its own hands and create its own system. The NextZero team, led by Sustainable Energy Program & Policy Senior Manager Zoe Eckert, collaborated with MMWEC's Information Technology department's Lance Dolgas and Jason Rosenthal to develop the new system.

"Although MMWEC IT has never undertaken a project such as the in-house rebate processing system, which required the use of several disparate technologies, we knew we had the skill sets in-house to develop a system that would outperform any third-party vendor solution while at the same time, implementing the system at a much lower cost than had we pursued alternative third-party vendor solutions," Dolgas says.

Transitioning the rebate processing in-house brings many benefits to NextZero's municipal light plant (MLP) customers.

The new system allows NextZero staff to answer customer questions more quickly and accurately. Customers who submit rebate applications can create an online account and track their rebate status, which they couldn't do before.

On NextZero's side, having access to all applications and supplemental documents makes it easier for staff to communicate with customers who have questions about their rebates.

For customers, the new system is very similar to the previous one, just with the information being submitted to NextZero versus an external vendor. Since the applications are submitted to NextZero directly, rebates are processed in four to six weeks - much faster than with the previous system.

"The ability for NextZero to bring rebate processing in-house means that our MLPs' ratepayers are working with staff

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Fitch Ratings Reviews Berkshire Wind Project Bonds; Ratings Outlook Unchanged

Fitch Ratings has reviewed the ratings of the Berkshire Wind Power Cooperative Corporation (BWPCC) as part of an internal only review and has concluded that there should be no change to the existing ratings or ratings outlook.

Fitch Ratings, one of the three nationally recognized credit rating agencies, in 2024 affirmed its AA- rating on bonds associated with the Berkshire Wind Power Project.

Berkshire Wind

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 BWPCC, 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 their joint action agency, the Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (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 BWPCC are made pursuant to a separate power sales contract. The obligations of the purchasers to MMWEC, and MMWEC's corresponding obligation to BWPCC, are absolute and unconditional.

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 BWPCC's operating risk assessment is low. This reflects an operating cost burden of 11.28 cents per kilowatt hour and the relatively small magnitude of the project costs as a percentage of the purchasers' total costs.

Berkshire Wind Phase One participants also include the utilities located in Ashburnham, Boylston, Groton, Hull, Paxton, Sterling, Templeton, and West Boylston. ∞

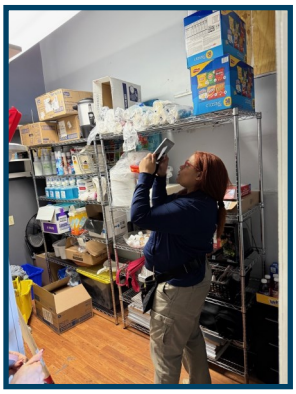
NextZero's Energy Solutions for Small Businesses Kicks Off in Templeton and Holyoke

MMWEC's NextZero energy efficiency program has expanded to include small business energy audits. The program partners with the Center for EcoTechnology (CET) and offers a suite of energy efficiency and electrification services tailored specifically for small businesses. This collaboration aims to help small businesses reduce their energy consumption, lower operational costs, and contribute to a more sustainable future.

The first small business audits were recently conducted at the First Church of Templeton in Templeton and Nueva Esperanza in Holyoke.

Zoe Eckert, MMWEC's Sustainable Energy Program & Policy Senior Manager, stated, "Our NextZero energy efficiency program continues to grow and build momentum. The small building energy audits are a win-win for both the businesses served and communities at large by lowering buildings' energy costs and reducing fossil fuel pollution through decarbonization."

CET offers detailed energy audits for small businesses with a building under 10,000 sq ft. The audit seeks to identify opportunities for energy savings. These audits include a thorough inspection of the building, HVAC systems, hot water systems, lighting, and building envelopes. CET provides Manual N calculations to ensure accurate sizing and design of air source heat pump systems, which are critical for optimizing energy efficiency and reducing electricity consumption. Additionally, consultations and design review and approval are included in the program.



Nueva Esperanza

CET also offers a range of additional services to enhance the energy efficiency programs for small businesses. They include a review of NextZero incentives offered by the MLP to ensure alignment with goals and maximized benefits for small businesses; new construction consultation services; and innovative financing to improve access to energy efficiency measures for low- and moderate-income residents.

These programs underscore the MLPs' commitment to sustainability and energy efficiency. By providing small businesses with the tools and support needed to reduce energy consumption and transition to renewable energy sources, CET and NextZero are helping to create a more sustainable future for communities across Massachusetts.

Four MLPs currently participate in the small business energy audit program, including those located in Holyoke, Ipswich, South Hadley, and Templeton.

For more information about the services offered by NextZero and CET, please visit www.NextZero.org. ∞

Attorney Maurice J. Ferriter, Longtime MMWEC General Counsel, Dies

Attorney Maurice J. Ferriter of Holyoke, longtime MMWEC General Counsel, died in December 2024, at the age of 94.

Ferriter, who served for several decades as MMWEC General Counsel, wrote the legislation, Chapter 775 of the Acts of 1975, which established MMWEC as a not-for-profit, public corporation and political subdivision of the Commonwealth. Chapter 775 has been instrumental in MMWEC's ability to provide critical services to the Commonwealth's municipal light plants for 50 years.

In addition to his work with MMWEC, Ferriter's commitment to the public power business model was evident in his work establishing the Municipal Electric Association of Massachusetts and the Northeast Public Power Association.

He was also an active member of the American Public Power Association (APPA), and received the APPA Person of the Year Award.

The Attorney Maurice J. Ferriter Library

Ferriter started a law practice on High Street in Holyoke and served as Holyoke City Solicitor in the 1960s. As the gas and electric industry became robust in the 1980s, he helped establish the law firm Ferriter, Scobbo and Rodophele in Boston, a law firm MMWEC still works with today.

In recognition of all of Ferriter's contributions to MMWEC and public power, the MMWEC Board of Directors passed a resolution in his honor at a board meeting earlier this year.

In addition, the law library at the MMWEC Administrative Office Building in Ludlow has been dedicated as the "Attorney Maurice J. Ferriter Law Library."

MMWEC is eternally grateful to Maurice Ferriter's dedication to the public power industry in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, helping to enable our clean energy future. ∞

SHELD Completes Milestone Advanced Metering Infrastructure Upgrade

A years-long metering project is now complete at South Hadley Electric Light Department (SHELD). The department recently finishing installing advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) electric meters town wide.

As SHELD's electric meters were nearly 20 years old and reaching the end of their life, General Manager Sean Fitzgerald, backed by the municipal light board, spearheaded the effort to replace the old meters with AMI ones. The bids, collection, and installation were managed by SHELD staff, with Electrical Engineer Matthew DelMonte, leading the team. All meters were installed by SHELD Electrician Robert Blasko and Electrical Maintenance Technician Shane Lavoie.

SHELD's Shane Lavoie and Robert Blasko

AMI meters offer many benefits to the light department and customers alike. Customers receive improved remote data collection with real-time, on-demand readings, customer service and operational efficiency.

For SHELD, the new meters include remote disconnection/connection capabilities, outage management notification and maps, and transformer load summaries. The meters alert SHELD to reverse rotation, low and high voltage, high demand, tampering, and unexpected usage.

SHELD began the rollout of field collectors and routers in December 2021, and the first AMI meters were installed in January 2022. All meters were installed by SHELD staff. From beginning to end, the project took two years and nine months to install four gateways, 12 routers, and nearly 8,000 meters. Staff managed the inventory and installation process and completed all the swaps in the billing system.

All the new data that is available to customers courtesy of the AMI meters can be viewed in the new free SHELD mobile app, allowing customers to track their usage and pay their bills all in once space.

"Our recent AMI meter upgrade provides a great opportunity for efficiency and helpful data usage, which allows our customers to have meter data at their fingertips with our new app," says SHELD Customer Service and Marketing Manager Kelly Frazier.

According to Frazier, since the project's completion in October, the new system has been running optimally and has made many daily and monthly processes automated. ∞

MMWEC Staff, Members Meet with Congressional Representatives, FERC

A group of MMWEC staff and light department managers brought several public power issues to numerous meetings on Capitol Hill during the annual American Public Power Association Legislative Rally in February.

The group, in coordination with the Northeast Public Power Association, met directly with several congressmen, including Congressman Richard Neal, Congressman Jim McGovern and Senator Edward Markey, along with staff. Topics of discussion included urging support for the preservation of the tax exemption for municipal bonds, preservation of clean energy tax credits under the Inflation Reduction Act, reinstatement of advance refunding bonds, load growth and resource development, supply chain and cost issues related to transformers, and ISO New England capacity reforms.

MMWEC staff also met with staff from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), FERC commissioners Judy Chang and David Rosner, and staff from the office of FERC Chairman Mark Christie. Earlier in the month, MMWEC staff met virtually with Commissioner Lindsay See. Staff discussed various issues, including capacity market reforms and transmission development. ∞

MMWEC staff Kate Roy, Matthew Ide, and Dan Murphy with Hull Municipal Light Plant Operations Manager Panos Tokadjian at Congressman Jim McGovern's office in D.C.

NextZero Moves… Continued from Page 1

members 100% versed and dedicated to public power and their programs," Eckert says. "NextZero understands how important an MLP's relationship with their customers is, and this change allows us to support that relationship by streamlining application review and payments."

Eckert added that the project was completed on time and within budget. According to Energy Efficiency Services Coordinator Kimberly Potito, customer response has been positive since the launch. Customers have noted that they enjoy being able to log in to see the status of their rebates and upload documentation they may have been missing. They also like that NextZero can give them an exact date that their rebate check will be mailed.

The system was soft launched with a few pilot MLPs at the end of 2024 and for all Members in January 2025. NextZero customers can submit rebates online at www.rebates.NextZero.org or print out the mail-in forms on www.NextZero.org. ∞

Senior Center Pipeline Safety Presentation Held

This winter, MMWEC held its annual electrical and gas pipeline safety awareness presentation at the Ludlow Senior Center as part of its community outreach efforts. MMWEC's Michael Russell presented on the dos and don'ts of gas pipeline safety and safety expert Ray Gouley from the R.F. Gouley Company covered general electric safety. ∞

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