

**Block Island Utility District  
Meeting of the Board of Utility  
Commissioner's  
Thursday, May 23, 2024 @ 4:00PM**

**Held at the American Legion**

**Meeting Minutes**

Participating BOD Members Present: Barbara MacMullan, Mary Jane Balser, John Warfel, Tom Risom, Ken Lacoste

Also Present: President Jeffery Wright, Tracy Fredericks, Jim Stockman, David Lewis, Sean McGarry, Dick Martin, Evan Carey, Tom Durden, Carlos Salinas.

Board Chair Barbara MacMullan called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm.

Barabara mentioned that we earned an ACSI customer satisfaction award won the award for 2023. Everyone involved with BIUD should be very proud.

**1. Public Input**

- Carlos Salinas asked Jeff and Tracy how far we have gotten on the request to post the recordings of the meetings on the website? Jeff offered that the challenge of posting to the website is too much for our small staff and that he is concerned about the quality of the recording.
- Carlos had a question about a comment Mary Jane Balser made at the last meeting and why the poles would be replaced at 20 years, why not 30-50 years. Where are we getting the poles? Jeff answered that we buy our poles from a national vendor he also reported that NRECA has a program called wood quality control. We require our vendors to have the WQC stamp on the wood products. The WQC inspectors go to the vendors and check on the quality of the poles.
- Carlos asked about the existing power supply contracts, and how does the process work on where we purchase our power from? He also asked about the upcoming rate case. Jeff answered that there was no new action on rate case. A rate case takes time, and it is not currently a pressing issue. Jeff answered regarding where we purchase our power, when we became 100% renewable effective January 1, 2024 and approved by the PUC, we are now required to publish a power supply portfolio mix. We will be pulling this together shortly. The majority of our energy comes from Shell North America. We get some from NYPA, First Light Energy, rooftop solar at the plant and the rest is either open market or shell. This varies by month. The second component to this is that anything that doesn't supply us with renewable energy credits, we purchase renewable energy credits to meet the 100% goal.

**2. Commissioner's Report**

- Chair Barbara MacMullan wanted to mention the ACIS customer service award.
- John gave an update on ETIPP grant. They had a meeting last week with members of Shelter Island, Deer Island and Martha's Vineyard. They are talking about what

they are doing and how it is going on their scoping. John noted that even though we have a lot of differences, there are a lot of similar power supply problems with island type communities and tourist destinations. The ETIPP crew is working on the energy road map, we meet every month, looking at load forecasts in different scenarios. What our options are to be energy resilient to 2040 and the various paths we can go on. We are looking at energy options under different demand scenarios, and how we can increase the amount of renewable resources on the island. We are looking at community solar, batteries and Trashology, with the goal of having more local power sources if the cable goes out. Discussion on ETIPP scenarios

- Tom Risom added that he is meeting with Matt Young monthly. Last action item was for him to put together a data package on the discharges for Tina Spier and her colleagues who want a tour of our facility here and Trashology's demo to make revisions of their draft bill to redefine their process.
- Ken asked if we can chart the use of charging EV's and heat pumps? Can ETIPP monitor the load the heat pumps are producing? This may give us some insight.
- Tom gave a treasurer's report. The monthly summary given by Jeff and Tracy, all is in order. The latest quarterly reports and the Audit are posted on the website. Form 7 is now on the website; it is an annual document that we report to CFC. CFC uses this report to create our key ratio trend analysis.

### **3. Approved Board Meeting Minutes from April 25, 2024 Regular Meeting (ACTION REQUESTED)**

Tom made a motion to approve as submitted, the motion was seconded by Mary Jane, the motion passed unanimously.

4. **Introduction to Federated Insurance Exchange (Scott Campbell)** Jeff explained that all of the insurance policies came with the Town's purchase of the Power Company. We did not make any changes to the carrier's. We started talking with Federated in 2022, regarding the process and requirements to become a Federated member. We will reduce our policies from 9 policies to 1 policy per month. They are in the process of creating a quote for us. They are very committed to safety.

Scott introduced himself and gave a description of Federated and what he does and their policies. He stated that Federated covers 94% of electric Coops in the country. They only electric serve Coops. They are non-profit insurance exchange, any margins at the end of the year are given back to the Coops.

Ken Lacoste asked if the pricing differs based on where you are located based on likelihood of storms, (tornado alley, hurricane). Scott said we are rated differently. Reinsurance is where this comes into place, it depends on who wants to buy our risk. We help pay for wildfires out west and they help pay for hurricane damage in the east. The insurance covers the substation, generators, buildings and equipment are covered but none of the lines or equipment in the field are not covered.

David Lewis asked how we fair that we are so close to the ocean. Scott offered that is not his area of expertise, that is the job of the safety committee. How the employees are managing and maintaining things, how well they are following safety guidelines. Scott added that we received a high grade, and we are doing a great job.

## **5. Review 2024 Strategic Plan**

- President Jeffery Wright presented his update not much new to update. We will start to complete the items as they come up. – on record.

## **6. President's Report**

- Jeffery Wright (on record) gave an update on the outage we had on May 6<sup>th</sup>. The outage began at 10:02 AM, with no immediately apparent cause. RI Energy came on the 11 am ferry, they identified the problem by 2:30 pm. They identified the fault as the high side cables from the transformer to the switchgear. Jeff added that they would probably find that the contractor they hired did not use the correct terminations. RI Energy installed the correct terminations. Jeff added that on a positive note the usage for this time of year and amount of load was low, so we didn't burn a ton of fuel. Jeff added that we were able to switch all of the island onto the generators in 7 minutes.

Jeff stated that RI Energy's response was great, the problem was solved by 4 pm the following day. RI Energy knows there is a problem, and they are working on solving this ongoing issue.

- Jeff reports that crews had completed another small piece of the voltage conversion on High St.
- Evan reported on the safety summit thanking everyone for letting him go to the training. He thought there was a great number of topics covered across varying experience levels. Networking with other power companies, and linemen, discussing what safety measures work for them and what issues they are coming across such as crypto mining or large data centers, EV chargers. Some of the trainings he attended included an aerial bucket safety training and a heat emergency training, contingency planning if something goes wrong, communications and managing dramatic events were other important topics presented.

- Tom reported that prior to the new company we did not have any safety programs. We have been implementing the safety instruction both inhouse and out in the field. It was a nightmare before, and we are now fixing many of the problems still out in the field. The trainings are invaluable. Tom also added that the stress level of the job has created a shortage of workers.

## **7. Presentation of Line Extension Design Standards and Considerations**

- Jeffery Wright presented (on record). Explained the thought process online design. A new project on West Beach Rd. has generated some questions on this topic. We chose to go over head instead of underground. Jeff explained that there are considerations that need to be 2,020 poles most of it is overhead which is easier to maintain and fix when something goes wrong. When a new line is requested, we meet with the member multiple times to discuss the options and price. We go by the RUS standards which meet all the standard electrical codes. The project on West Beach Rd cost was a big factor. The member pays for all of the costs. Other considerations include aesthetics, future maintainability, capacity requirements and future connections. Jeff added that he dislikes underground because it is harder to find a problem and takes longer to fix any problems, and it's not as reliable. Every homeowner has the right to cost effective power, we have the obligation to provide power. The driving factor for this project was the road, we didn't want to create a problem with the road like what they had with the driveway.
- Sean McGarry asked about the step transformers on Corn Neck Rd and the AT&T cellular extensions. Sean expressed his concern about not hearing any public input prior to these installations which are visible and, in our view, shed. Sean asked the commissioners to set a threshold for when there should be a public dialog prior to installations of this type. Jeff Wright added that prior to all of these installations, there was a great deal of discussion including pictures and articles in the Block Island Times.

## **8. Discussion of Performance Review Process of President Jeffery Wright (Review to take place in the June 2024 Meeting).**

- Barbara MacMullan explained there is a review form which the BOD's fill out, send to Barbara and then there is a closed session discussion of the BOD. There will be a special meeting on Tuesday, June 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 at the BIUD conference room.
- Barbara suggested we reschedule the July 25<sup>th</sup> meeting to Thursday, August 1<sup>st</sup> due to Barbara going away on vacation.

Tom Risom moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ken Lacoste, the motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned 6:00 pm.

