

LIGHT LINES

Newsletter of the Sterling Municipal Light Department

September 2020 Edition

General Manager: Sean Hamilton Light Board: Chairman: Joe Curtin; Vice Chairman: Brian Pierce; Clerk: Eric Darlington

Sean Hamilton, General Manager

Brian Foley Retirement - After many years serving the public power industry and 12 years with the SMLD, Brian Foley began his well-deserved retirement at the end of August. While the COVID-19 pandemic prevented us from giving him a proper gathering to recognize and thank him for his service, I'm hoping you have an opportunity to see him to congratulate and wish him well. I would personally and publicly like to thank Brian for his years of hard work and dedication to the SMLD and the residents and businesses of Sterling. His calm demeanor and friendly smile will be missed.

*Operation Building Renovations - at our 2 Leominster Road building continue with the 2nd floor addition nearly completed. The exterior siding is done, and the fire alarms and plumbing are almost finished. I would once again like to take this opportunity to thank the administration, instructors and students at **Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School (Monty Tech)** for their part in this project. Installing a second floor on a building located in the center of town was no small feat and their willingness to assist us was certainly a catalyst to get it started. Now it's heading for completion by local contractors and the SMLD Operations crew. We still plan for an early fall completion date.*

*Electric Rates Comparison - For the past 10 years I have been writing the Light Lines Newsletter and seldom touched upon the differential in rates for the SMLD to other area Investor Owned Utilities (IOUs). For an average customer using 750 kWhrs per month over the past year, the **residential customer bill is 47% lower and for a commercial customer it is 20% lower per month** compared to area Investor Owned Utilities (IOUs). While low rates are the benchmark that we are normally judged, I would be remiss not to mention the great work by our line crews who have been recognized for the past 6 years by the **American Public Power Association** not only for their **safety** but for the **reliability of our distribution system** and the 62 minute average restoration time.*

*Energy Storage Project and Community Solar Plus Storage Projects - The combined savings of the solar and the two battery storage projects in Sterling reached **over \$1,549,000 in savings** for the customers of Sterling Light. This was achieved by using the batteries to shed load during peak power periods that lowers our transmission costs and future power capacity obligations. The batteries are operated by our joint action agency, Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC), based on peak load forecasts and market conditions. We also received load reductions from our commercial solar plants and temporary generators during the peak summer months, further reducing our transmission costs.*

*The Solar Projects have produced over **36,953,095 kWhrs of non-emitting energy that is enough to power every average home in Sterling for a year and a half.***

Sterling Municipal Light Department, 50 Main Street, Sterling, MA 01564-2129

Telephone: 978-422-8267 Web: www.energysterling.com

Normal Business Hours: Mon– Thurs 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Friday 7:30-11:30a.m. Full 24-hour coverage for power emergencies

Please call 978-422-8267. After normal business hours Sterling Police Dispatch at 978-422-7331.

Municipal Fiber INET - The SMLD Operations crew along with line crews from West Boylston and Boylston recently completed the installation of a fiber line from Shrewsbury to Sterling. This 23-mile line was funded in part from a \$150,000 grant received by the Town of Sterling. This project will tie together communications for all municipal buildings and provide fiber internet service to 26 of the town's municipal buildings and assets.

SMLD Logo Redesign - The SMLD is working with JC Marketing Associates to replace the SMLD logo. While we know that the Chocksett Indian is special to the Sterling area, today it may not always be recognized that way. The SMLD Board of Commissioners felt it to be an appropriate time to look at alternatives to avoid any negative views that could come our way. We will be proud to display our new logo in the very near future.

COVID-19 Pandemic - I would like to offer a special thank you to all our customers who understood our new way of operating during the pandemic to keep our customers and employees safe. We would also like to thank and express our sincere appreciation to all the first responders and medical personnel who provided care during this time.

From Our Operations Department
Advanced Meter Infrastructure (AMI) replacement

In Late September 2020 we expect to have a new AMI infrastructure installed, replacing the AMI meters that were installed beginning in 2008. There are many reasons this is taking place, but primarily for the high failure rate of the meters, the cost to replace them and having to go out to the meter location and read them manually. The SMLD already has an Outage Management System (OMS) built that is not being used in real time due to the outdated technology. This new AMI system will enable us to access information quickly, better monitor our distribution system power quality and operate our energy projects more efficiently in real time. A meter installation street schedule will be placed on our website www.energysterling.com, as well as message boards in our work areas. We will knock on each door before the meter is changed and **WILL NOT have to enter your home. The SMLD employees will have a displayed photo ID.** If the day scheduled for the meter change is not convenient for you, please call our office to reschedule another time. If you have any questions, contact us at (978) 422-8267.

From Our Customer Service Department

Some Services We Provide Include:

- ***Free ACH Payments***
- Several Payment Options including payments over the phone.
- On-line account update for contact information, phone number, email address or other (www.energysterling.com)
- Rebate Programs to purchase new appliances, please check out the rebates we offer at www.munihelps.org
- Customer Payment and Usage Portals
- Budget Plan Options
- Paperless Billing
- Free Home Energy Audits – Call 888-333-7525 to schedule an appointment
- Vehicle Rebates on the Chevy Bolt
- Community Solar Rate
- Sponsor of the Neighbor-To-Neighbor Fund (Call us for sign up)

Residents who rely on life supporting medical equipment should contact our office to be put on our ***Power Priority List***. This list is only shared with our Police and Fire Departments for follow up in emergency situations.

Be aware of scammers. The SMLD will not call you to make a payment over the phone. If you receive a call, hang up and call us at **978-422-8267** or after hours call **Sterling Dispatch at 978-422-7331**.

From all of us at the SMLD, please stay safe and hope to see you soon.

Public Power
“Owned by the People We Serve”