

LIGHT LINES

Newsletter of the Sterling Municipal Light Department

Spring 2021 Edition

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

Sean Hamilton, General Manager

Retirement

After serving the Public Power Industry for 42 years, and nearly 20 years with the SMLD, I will begin my retirement at the end of May. I will however continue to spend some time working with **Darren Borge** as he transitions into his new position as **General Manager**. Darren has been with the SMLD for 13 years spending the last few years managing the Operations Department and most recently attaining the position as **Assistant General Manager**. Darren has been instrumental in the successful completion of the many solar, battery, and building projects and I am certain that he will continue to use his leadership skills to guide the SMLD for many successful years.

Operation Building Renovations - In November 2020 we received our occupancy permit for our newly renovated 2 **Leominster Road building**. After 18 months the **second-floor addition** was completed, and our operations staff officially moved into their new facility. Although the Covid-19 Pandemic forced the **Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School (Monty Tech)** students from the job-site, I would like to thank the administration, instructors, and students for their part in getting this project started and for projects they completed in the past for the SMLD.

Electric Rates Comparison - In May of 1993, the SMLD was **70 votes away from being sold to Mass Electric** (Now National Grid). It was predicted in the final report to the Sterling Light Department Sales Search Committee that by this time the **Mass Electric rates would be 20% less than SMLD**. The actual outcome was the reverse with the **SMLD being 47% lower than National Grid** for an average customer using 750 kWhrs per month in 2020.

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** by reducing our transmission costs.

The Sterling Solar Projects have produced over 39,287,952 kWhrs of non-emitting energy that is enough to power every average home in Sterling for a year and a half. We expect to hit 40,000,000 kWhrs in mid-2021.

Municipal Fiber INET - The installation of the fiber ring to the municipal buildings has been completed and the transfer of the buildings onto the new fiber has begun. This project will eventually 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 – After several versions of an SMLD logo our staff and board members unanimously voted, and we are proud to display our new logo.



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.

COVID-19 Pandemic Guidelines - As the pandemic continues to impact the way we operate, we thank our customers for understanding as we keep our customers and employees safe.

Annual Reliability Report - The SMLD subscribes to the **American Public Power Association (APPA) E-Reliability Tracking System** that tracks outages and allows us to compare our system reliability to our peers in the Northeast and across the country. I am happy to report that the SMLD was recognized for the 8th year in a row for our **average outage time or Customer Average Interruption Index (CAIDI) that was 60.25 minutes**. This is well below **the Northeast average of 146.95 minutes or the 271 reporting utilities average of 143.25**. While we know we are only as good as our last storm and mother nature has a habit of keeping us honest, the report certainly reflects the commitment the SMLD Board made by funding these programs. Kudos to Darren Borge, Tim Gray and the Operation Crew for the tree trimming program and the distribution system improvements. **Now about them squirrels...**

*From Our Operations Department
Darren Borge, Assistant General Manager*

We are continuing with the **AMI Change-Out Program**. As of April 1, 2021, we changed out 3,232 of the 3,495 residential meters and will change 455 commercial and industrial customer meters. 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*. **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 let us know to reschedule another time. If you have any questions, contact us at (978) 422-8267.

Improvements - This year we set 27 new poles and pulled 10 double poles. We have installed 3,300' of new 1/0 primary covered tree-wire and removed 3,300' of #4 solid bare copper primary. The benefits of covered tree-wire to bare copper is to eliminate outages due to incidental contacts from trees, branches, or wildlife on poles. We also added (2) new single phase reclosers. These reclosers go in place of overcurrent line fuses. These recloser will help in reducing the number of customers that will be part of a sustained outage and limit it down to just the affected area or device. The SMLD Operations staff also installed 40 new meters through the SMLD distribution system

New SMLD APP - The SMLD is in the process of developing a new phone APP that will provide you the ability to pay your bill, access up-to-date information on our rebates, programs (listed below) and will enable outage notifications, including access to our outage map. **In order for us to communicate with you, it is important we have your latest contact information. Please go to our website at www.energysterling.com and log in to the SEDC customer portal or call customer service 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**

Public Power
“Owned by the People We Serve”