

# Light Commission April 15, 2025 meeting minutes

To: Light Commission: Commissioners  
Light Department: J. Kowalik, General Manager  
From: Jean-Jacques Yarmoff  
Date: June 30, 2025

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A quorum being present, Vice-Chair Frechette brought the meeting to order at 4:01 pm. Because of a connection issue, the start of the meeting was postponed by 15 minutes to ensure remote participants were able to receive the correct link and join the meeting. The meeting was held in person and with remote internet access, both available to public participation. A recording of the meeting is made available to the public at the following [link](#).

## **Participated in meeting:**

Commissioners: Commissioners Frechette, Hull, Smith and Yarmoff all participated in person.  
Light Department: General Manager, J. Kowalik.

**Marblehead Land Acknowledgment** declaration was read by Commissioner Yarmoff.

## **Amendment #3 to General Manager's Employment Contract**

Secretary Yarmoff proposed that the board execute Amendment #3 to the General Manager's employment contract, an agreement that provides a retention bonus to the General Manager to stay in his position until the end of the term of his contract in April 2026. In the ensuing discussion:

Commissioner Hull regretted that no satisfactory explanation had been given to him as to why the General Manager's contract was not going to be extended beyond April 2026 and expressed concern at the burden of paying the salary of two general managers serving concurrently.

Commissioner Frechette explained that the decision to not renew the General Manager's contract when it expires in April 2026, taken after careful consideration, reflects a difference in long term strategic vision, not a reflection on Joe's performance. Joe assumed leadership at a critical juncture, stabilized operations, and has overseen the delivery of consistently exceptional service since. To ensure continuity and give the department ample time to plan, the board proposes to amend Joe's contract to include a retention bonus that encourages him to remain through his full term. The board's foremost responsibility is to safeguard the department's long-term stability while acknowledging the contributions of its leaders. By supporting Joe through the remainder of his tenure — and demonstrating that we treat our general managers with respect and fairness — we strengthen our ability to attract and retain top talent for years to come.

Commissioner Yarmoff commented that the amendment under consideration proposes that the General Manager receive a bonus if he stays in the position until the end of his term, dependent on the General Manager fulfilling three critical tasks: — completion of the Village 13 substation buildout; — documenting succession planning and — setting up a three-year capital investment plan.

Commissioner Smith commented that the opportunity cost of potentially having no manager in place before a succession plan is effective is more expensive than the dollar amount of the retention bonus

if Joe reaches the end of his term. This is reflective of his contribution as General Manager over two successive terms and his contribution to this Department.

**Vote #2025-05** Motion to execute the Amendment #3 to the General Manager's employment contract was moved by Commissioner Yarmoff and seconded by Commissioner Smith.  
Votes: Frechette, Yes; Hull, No; Smith, Yes; Yarmoff, Yes.

Commissioner Yarmoff commented that following Joe's public mention at a MEAM meeting (MEAM is the association of the MLPs General Managers) that his contract was not going to be renewed we have been approached by potential candidates, who are all experienced people. While their interest is clearly serious, we don't know at this stage when they would be available. We will evaluate the situation and hope to be able to introduce to the town, soon, a great candidate who will be able to lead the Light Department. We would like to thank all the staff of MMLD, who are serving the town well, at all hours of the day or the night, whenever an emergency strikes. We witnessed their hard work a couple of weeks ago, when a tree fell on the main feeder line and all the crew were mobilized on a Sunday, in freezing conditions, to deal with the problem. They work constantly to ensure that residents are well served, and they are doing a great job. On behalf of the Commission, and the whole Town, Thank you!

#### **Election of Light Commission Officers**

Following the resignation of the previous Chair, the Commission elected a new group of officers.

**Vote #2025-06** Commissioner Frechette nominated Commissioner Yarmoff for Chair, seconded by Commissioner Smith. Unanimous.

**Vote #2025-07** Commissioner Yarmoff nominated Commissioner Frechette for Vice Chair, seconded by Commissioner Smith. Unanimous.

**Vote #2025-08** Commissioner Yarmoff nominated Commissioner Smith for Secretary, Seconded by Commissioner Frechette, Unanimous.

**Public Comments:** In answer to a Light Department staff question, MMLD staff will be able to participate in the audition of the new General Manager: interviews will be held in public and staff will be encouraged to participate and ask questions.

#### **Executive Session**

During the public meeting of the Light Commission held on April 15, 2025, Chair Yarmoff requested a motion to enter Executive Session for strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel, not to return to open session.

The motion was moved by Commissioner Yarmoff, seconded by Commissioner Smith.  
Votes: Simon Frechette: Yes; Mike Hull: Yes; Adam Smith, Yes; Jean-Jacques Yarmoff: Yes.

The Executive Session started at 4:46 pm, with Commissioners Frechette, Hull, Smith and Yarmoff and MMLD General Manager Joe Kowalik participating. Commissioner Hull left the meeting at 5:30 pm. The Executive Session concluded at 5:57 pm at which point a motion to adjourn was proposed, seconded and, after a roll call of the commissioners voting unanimously in favor, adopted.

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