

Light Commission July 22, 2025 Open Meeting Minutes

To: Light Commission: Commissioners
Light Department: J. Kowalik, General Manager
From: Matt Harrington
Date: Oct 28, 2025

A quorum being present, Chair Yarmoff brought the meeting to order at 4:06 pm. The meeting was held in person at MMLD HQ 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, Harrington, and Yarmoff participated in person. Commissioner Smith participated via Zoom.

Light Department: General Manager, Joe Kowalik

DOER: Dillan Patel, Northeast Regional Coordinator, Green Communities, Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources

Town of Marblehead: Logan Casey, Sustainability Coordinator, Community Development & Planning Dept

Marblehead Land Acknowledgment declaration was read by Commissioner Frechette.

Executive Session

- Motion to meet in Executive Session to conduct a strategy session in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel was moved by Vice Chair Frechette, seconded by Commissioner Hull
- Roll call vote: Frechette: Yes; Harrington: Yes; Hull: Yes; Smith: Yes; Yarmoff: Yes.

The executive session started at 4:08 pm, with Commissioners Frechette, Hull, Harrington, and Yarmoff participating in person. Commissioner Smith participated via Zoom.

The executive session concluded at 4:58 pm with a roll call of participating commissioners, all voting in favor of returning to an open session. After resolving technical issues, the meeting started again around 5:05 pm.

Public Session

Comments from the Public

- Albert Jordan (in person)- Expressed displeasure in Joe Kowalik leaving and hopes that the new GM has local knowledge. Let the commission know that he thought it would be a good idea to have rates that charged higher rates to large users of electricity.
- Charlie Burckmyer (in person)- Expressed disappointment in losing Joe Kowalik.
- No comments from on-line participants

Approval of minutes of prior meetings

- Approval of minutes of the Board's Selection Subcommittee meetings of June 3, June 6 and June 13. The June 17 meeting of the Selection Subcommittee was cancelled.
 - Hull suggested that the Subcommittee should approve their minutes before the full commission does. Board members agreed.
- **VOTE 2025-19** Motion to approve the minutes of the July 9 Executive Session
 - Motion moved by Hull, seconded by Frechette
 - Roll call vote: Frechette: Yes; Harrington: Yes; Hull: Yes; Smith: Yes; Yarmoff: Yes

Review of current General Manager

- **Vote #2025-20** on a motion to approve a salary raise for the current GM by 3%, applied retroactively to April 8, 2025, based on performance vs goals for calendar year 2024.
 - Motion moved by Hull, seconded by Frechette
 - Roll call vote: Frechette: Yes; Harrington: Abstain; Hull: Yes; Smith: Yes; Yarmoff: Yes

Appointment of next General Manager, Jon Blair

- **Vote #2025-21** on a motion to appoint Jon Blair as the next MMLD General Manager
 - Motion moved by Harrington, Seconded by Frechette
 - Discussion:
 - Hull asks what is the transition plan
 - Yarmoff says the only action the board can take is to appoint a GM.
 - Transition is operational and out of the board's jurisdiction.
 - Hull follows up to see how long Joe will stay
 - Yarmoff states that it depends on when the next GM can assume the position, which until we talk with him, is unknown. But as the process of hiring a new GM has been ongoing for some time and is uncomfortable for everybody, this transition should occur as quickly as possible.
 - Smith speaking as a member of the Selection Subcommittee:
 - The Subcommittee set out a set of criteria (See criteria list on page 16) to evaluate 90 resumes and narrow it down based on important criteria. Jon Blair was the top candidate from the start based on technical and GM experience. It gives Smith a lot of confidence that he can get the job done. Smith supports the motion
 - Frechette reported that the Subcommittee voted to choose Jon Blair unanimously, including MMLD staff members.
 - Roll call vote:
 - Frechette: Yes; Harrington: Yes; Hull: Abstain; Smith: Yes; Yarmoff: Yes
 - Hull agrees that Blair is the best candidate despite being not happy with the process, the reason for the abstain vote.
- **Vote #2025-22** on a motion to empower the Chair and Secretary to negotiate an employment contract with the next GM.
 - See Motion in last slide on page 5: "Motion to request that the Light Commission Chair, assisted by the Light Commission Secretary, negotiate the terms of an employment contract with the chosen candidate for the General Manager position at MMLD, within the guidelines fixed by the board in executive session."
 - Moved by Frechette, seconded by Hull
 - Roll call vote: Frechette: Yes; Harrington: Yes; Hull: Yes; Smith: Yes; Yarmoff: Yes

Green Communities Program overview

- Dillan Patel, Regional Coordinator for Green Communities and Logan Casey (MHD) present.
 - See attached slides for details
 - Questions
 - Hull: Clarifying that the only guaranteed grant is the initial grant
 - Confirmed by presenter
 - Hull: What are the penalties for exiting?
 - Presenter said that the penalties are steep.
 - Hull: Do the grants only go to municipal or private? If we exit the program, do they need to be paid back?
 - Patel: Will follow up with details
 - Hull: Asked if cost to participate could change in the future?
 - Harrington followed up to see a cost change, can it trigger an opt-out?
 - Patel - Cost changes would take an act of legislature and would not allow an opt-out.
 - Kowalik: Asking about the number of MLPs that are enrolled. Has this been economically beneficial for the rate payers? Interested in benefit for taxpayers, but paid by rate payers. Can we get the value of benefit received by participants?
 - Patel: Ashburnham has received \$500k in grants, and can get the numbers for other MLP
 - Casey: Can investigate the data as well
 - Community question: Does the lack of 3A approval impact ability for grants
 - Patel and Casey: Unknown, but they will investigate.
 - The Chair concluded that a request from the Select Board to the Light Board will be necessary for the Light Board to consider a RET charge. And expresses that our rates very competitive.

General Manager Updates

- **Village 13 Upgrade**
 - Major milestone met:
 - Five switchgear pieces delivered and installed successfully
 - Thank you to MPD, Highway, Water & Sewer, MMLD, and 8 vendors. (Full list in slides)
 - Overview of completed steps and next steps in slides
 - Budget in Slides
 - \$10 million project paid out of in-house funds without debt or increases
 - Yarmoff acknowledges the difficulty of a project like this while working with live power and coordination with water and sewer challenges, ensuring continuing service to the town.

- Frechette asked for a summary of delays out of MMLD control
 - Joe: Equipment almost a year late due to supplier issues such as a cyber-attack and a factory move. As well as working around transformers that arrived too early.
- **New Employee Introduction:** Michael Hall - Energy Efficiency Marketing Coordinator
- **MMLD New EV Charging Infrastructure Policy**
 - Policy has come up as there was a meeting between Town and School about EV charging. MMLD should have a standing policy
 - Proposal: MMLD lead the design, installation, operation and maintenance of public EV Charging (See slides for additional components)
 - EV Charging at schools could be a good benefit to attract quality town and school employees
 - Why MMLD?
 - We understand current loads and limitations.
 - Experience in managing 10 Public Level 2 chargers
 - Example of creating an MMLD strategic electrification fund
 - Frechette asked if other MLPs have done these?
 - Joe said that not many, but it is often because other communities have more commercially available charging
 - Yarmoff thinks that the proposal makes sense for three reasons:
 - 1. Infrastructure can be complicated and expensive, and MMLD has the experience.
 - 2 Being able to control peak usage is a benefit due to expected increased electricity demand. Random and uncoordinated Charger installation could destabilize the grid.
 - 3 As an “old town” resident without a driveway, JJY and other old town residents need to rely on public charging infrastructure. MMLD has the most public infrastructure (infrastructure and poles in all the streets) and is best placed to bring infrastructure equitably to all residents.
 - Smith adds Gerry School renovation is installing 2 EV chargers, and perhaps this is a good use case.
 - Logan Casey adds Brown School and Gerry projects have spearheaded the need for this conversation. Green Marblehead Committee is pushing for more public charging infrastructure and could be a good liaison from the town to the MMLD.

A motion to adjourn was moved by Commissioner Hull, seconded by Commissioner Frechette
 Votes: Simon Frechette: Yes; Mike Hull: Yes; Adam Smith, yes; Jean-Jacques Yarmoff: Yes; Matt Harrington: Yes. The meeting concluded at 6:20 pm.

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Documents showed during the July 22nd meeting are reproduced in the following pages.



Agenda

- 4:00 Call to Order, Executive Session
- 5:00 Open Session, Public Comments
 - Candidates for GM, Process next steps. **Votes**
 - General Manager review and **Vote**
- 5:30 Green Communities review
- 6:00 GM updates
- 6:30 Adjourn



New General Manager Process: Next steps

- Propose to empower Chair and Secretary to negotiate employment contract: vote in open session
- Draft specific contract, legal review
- Disseminate draft to Board
- Negotiate with candidate



New General Manager Process: Motion

- Motion to request that the Light Commission Chair, assisted by the Light Commission Secretary, negotiate the terms of an employment contract with the chosen candidate for the General Manager position at MMLD, within the guidelines fixed by the board in executive session.



General Manager's Updates

- Village 13 substation project update
- *New MMLD Policy proposal:* MMLD to assume lead responsibility for the design, installation, operation, and maintenance of the town's public EV charging infrastructure.



Village 13 substation project update

Switchgear Construction Schedule Myers Controlled Power- Canton, Ohio

Task	Dates
Housing Construction & Assembly	Complete
Electrical Wiring	March 6 - June 6
Testing	June 9 – June 24
Customer Final Assembly Testing	June 23 – June 24
Punchlist Resolution	June 25 – June 31
Disassembly into 5 sections for Shipping	July 1 – July 14
Ship to Marblehead Village 13 site	July 14- July 18 (arriving July 17 & 18)



MMLD New EV Charging Infrastructure Policy

- Lead the design, installation, operation, and maintenance of public EV charging
- To include EV charging of town fleet vehicles, town employee vehicles, residents, and visitors
- To include EV charging on town building sites, public parking lots, and on street parking.
- May include agreements with private commercial and industrial property owners who want to offer their customers or employees onsite EV charging.



MMLD EV Charging Infrastructure Policy

Why does it make sense?

1. MMLD knows the current electric loads & limitations at potential locations ...manage installation costs and capacity planning.
2. MMLD has the experience of managing 10 public Level 2 EV charging spaces for the past ~3+ years, with excellent EV charger operational uptime
3. **An example of MMLD Strategic Electrification Funding:** MMLD can choose to absorb the installation costs and future costs for preventive maintenance, extended warranty payments, and set pricing of EV charging rates. Only the wintertime snow shoveling of parking spaces is TBD...or left to DPW.



MMLD EV Charging Infrastructure Policy

4. Support to the Marblehead Public School EV fleet vehicles and employee car charging at school parking lots town-wide. (Recognize MPS as the largest single employer in Marblehead.)
5. Knowledge of existing DEP EVIP state grant programs and MassCEC/DOER/MMWEC demonstration grant programs, as Vehicle to Grid.
6. Potential for synergy with MMLD's NextZero residential smart charging programs.
7. **Ability to directly control EV public charging demand during critical peak periods.**



MMLD EV Charging Infrastructure Policy

8. Avoid a hodge-podge of uncoordinated public EV charging units, with varying pricing and reliability.
9. Roundhouse Road - MMLD & Select Board have shared in the care, custody, and control of the town's largest off-street public parking lot.
10. MMLD's new Energy Programs Manager has EV charging installation and operations experience.



MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY RESOURCES

Green Communities Program

And the Renewable Energy Trust

July 2025

Presented by
Dillan Patel, Regional Coordinator, Green Communities
Division



Our Mission

The Department of Energy Resources' (DOER) mission is to create a clean, affordable, resilient, and equitable energy future for all in the Commonwealth.

Who We Are: As the State Energy Office, DOER is the primary energy policy agency for the Commonwealth. DOER supports the Commonwealth's clean energy goals as part of a comprehensive Administration-wide response to the threat of climate change. DOER focuses on transitioning our energy supply to lower emissions and costs, reducing and shaping energy demand, and improving our energy system infrastructure.

What We Do: To meet our objectives, DOER connects and collaborates with energy stakeholders to develop effective policy. DOER implements this policy through planning, regulation, and providing funding. DOER provides tools to individuals, organizations, and communities to support their clean energy goals. DOER is committed to transparency and education, supporting the accessible access to energy information and knowledge.

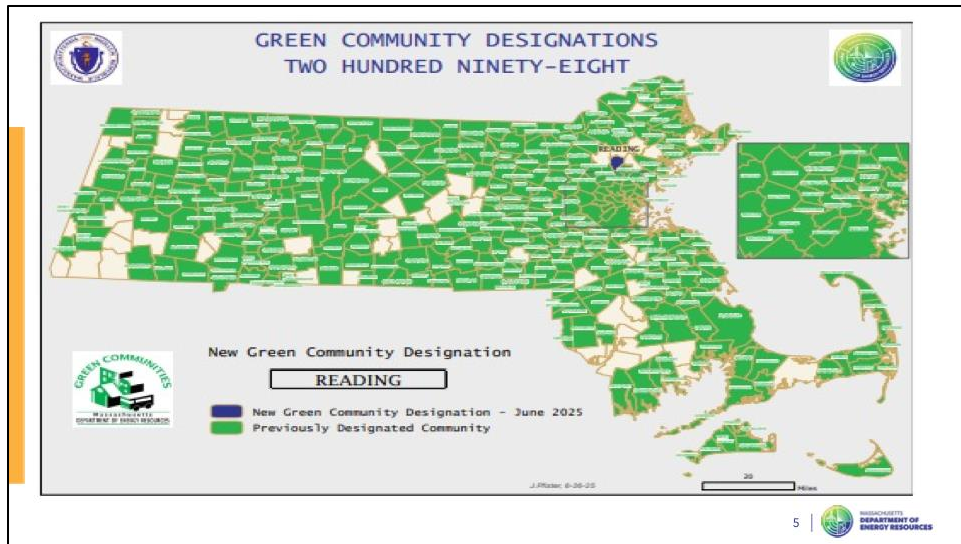


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ENERGY RESOURCES

Introduction

- **The Green Communities Program provides technical assistance and funding to municipalities for municipal energy efficiency and decarbonization**
- **Set up under the Green Communities Act of 2008, and first GCs designated in 2010**
- **\$54 million awarded so far**
 - Over 30 municipalities receiving more than \$1 million since designation
- **Nearing 300 out of 351 municipalities**
- **Grants are funded through Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) allocations - more on this later**

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Becoming a Green Community

M.G.L. Ch. 25A §10

As-of right siting and expedited permitting

- RE
- RE R&D
- RE Industry

Stretch Code

FEV Policy

20% municipal energy reduction

RET Charge

- At least one IOU customer
- RET agreement with MassCEC

Focus of presentation

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Renewable Energy Trust

M.G.L. Ch. 20 §20

Section 20. (a) The department shall require a mandatory charge of **0.5 mill per kilowatt-hour** for all electricity consumers, except those served by a municipal lighting plant [...], to support the development and promotion of renewable energy projects. All revenues generated by the mandatory charge shall be deposited into the **Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust Fund**, established under section 9 of chapter 23J.

(b) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary: (1) a municipal lighting plant which does not supply generation service outside its own service territory [...] may elect to assess and remit a mandatory charge per kilowatt-hour upon its electricity consumers on the same terms and conditions as apply to the charge imposed on consumers residing in competitive distribution service territories under this section; provided, however, that **such an election by a municipal lighting plant shall be irrevocable [...]** and (2) in administering the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust Fund, the **Massachusetts clean energy technology center, shall not make any grant or loan or provide any subsidy from the trust fund to any municipal lighting plant or consumer residing in the distribution service territory of such municipal lighting plant unless: (A) a mandatory charge per kilowatt-hour is assessed against all consumers residing in the distribution service territory** and remitted to the collaborative under the first sentence of subsection (a) [...] [exceptions made for demonstrable public benefits or extraordinary circumstances]

More
information
n here.

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What is MassCEC?

The Clean Energy Center is a quasi-state agency.

MassCEC supports municipalities, non-profits, commercial entities and residences for decarbonization and electrification. Support can be through technical assistance, grants, planning support, or loans and can include:

- Decarbonization roadmap planning
- Vehicle-to-grid bi-directional charging
- School decarbonization planning and funding (Green School Works)
- Climate tech
- School bus electrification planning and deployment
- Workforce development
- Housing retrofits



What does the RET go to?

It helps fund MassCEC operations.

- MassCEC receives \$20-22 million a year from the charge.
- Majority of funding comes from govt transfers and wind turbine services.
- Govt transfers vary widely from year to year depending on special projects.
- Many MassCEC offerings are contingent on paying the RET unless it is in the public interest.
- Joining the RET is **irrevocable** and there are penalty payments for derogation.
- The \$0.0005/kwh charge has not changed since inception. Changing it would require an Act by the General Court.
- Joining the RET does not guarantee any funding from MassCEC; each grant has its own eligibility parameters.

Who has adopted the RET?

10 MLPs:

- Ashburnham
- Falmouth
- Gosnold
- Holden
- Holyoke
- Russell
- Templeton
- Ipswich
- Boxborough
- Reading (most recently)

But the map has more MLPs that are Green Communities!

MLPs can circumvent the RET charge if at least one customer within or along municipal borders gets electricity service from a regulated utility (Eversource, National Grid).

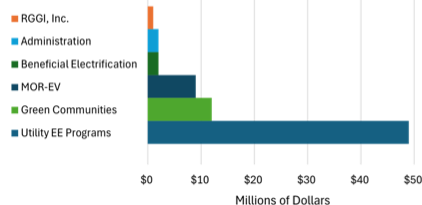
Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative



RGGI 101

- Regional GHG cap-and-trade program among 11 northeast states; MA joined in 2008 under the Green Communities Act
- Fossil power plants pay for carbon credits via auction
- Auction proceeds distributed to each state; MA received \$1.2 bn since 2008
- per law some \$ goes to Green Communities
- Marblehead MLD pays indirectly through wholesale purchases from fossil power plants (e.g. Stony Brook and Spot Market)
- In 2022 MA invested \$72 million from RGGI auction proceeds
 - \$12 million goes to Green Communities
 - Remainder to Mass Save and MOR-EV

RGGI Investments by Recipient in 2022



Source: Mass.gov

To be clear...

RET is separate from Green Communities.

The RET requirement for become a Green Community was the intent of the 2008 Green Communities Act **even though the RET has nothing to do with Green Communities.**

The RET funds MassCEC Operations.

Adopting the RET is one criterion for Green Communities Designation AND it unlocks funding from MassCEC.

RGGI funds Green Communities Grants.

Marblehead ratepayers already pay into RGGI indirectly through any fossil generation purchases that MLD makes.

Quick Summary

RGGI

- 1 RGGI is a multistate compact that already influences wholesale electric purchases.
- 2 RGGI funds Green Communities.
- 3 Green Communities benefits Town-owned buildings.

RET

- 1 IOUs must charge the RET; optional for MLPs but mandatory if becoming a Green Community.
- 2 RET funds MassCEC.
- 3 MassCEC benefits the public and private sectors.



Green Communities MMLD Conversation

July 22nd, 2025



Why is Marblehead considering this?

- **2018 Town Meeting Article 45** – “100% Carbon Free energy... including in electricity production, building energy use and transportation...”
- **2023 Net Zero Roadmap** – Adopted by Select Board, formalized Community-wide Net Zero by 2040 goal
 - Becoming a Green Community is goal

Green Communities **aligns with our community's Net Zero goals** and **will provide financial support necessary** to help us get there

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Application Requirements

- ☒ As-of-right zoning for renewable energy facilities
- ☒ 1 year or less permitting process for siting renewable energy facilities
- ☐ Establish a Municipal Energy Baseline and develop an Energy Reduction Plan
- ☐ Adopt fuel-efficient vehicle procurement policy
- ☒ Adopt the Stretch Building Code

Municipal Light Plant Communities: Must adopt Renewable Energy Charge

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Benefits to Green Communities Designation

Designation Grant

- \$150,000 to \$170,000 award

Competitive Grant

- Up to \$125,000 per round

Additional programing opportunities
through MassCEC for municipality,
businesses, and residents

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Projects Eligible for Green Communities Competitive Funding

- Energy Conservation Measures
 - Weatherization
 - Insulation
- HVAC Equipment
- Lighting and Building Controls
- EV Charging and Vehicles
- Technical support and Training



Photo Credit: Sustainable Marblehead



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Additional Programs Unlocked by Renewable Energy Trust

- Building Electrification and Transformation Accelerator (BETA): Roadmaps
 - Non-profits, Public entities
- Mass Fleet Advisor
 - Commercial, Non-profits, Public entities
- Vehicle-to-Everything Demonstration Projects
 - Residents, Commercial, Public entities



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Green Communities Next Steps

Items Underway:

- ZEV First Procurement Policy
 - Awaiting review and consideration by Select Board
- Municipal Energy Reduction Plan
 - PowerOptions developing plan
 - Completing MassEnergyInsight Building Inventory



Light Commission must adopt REC prior to applying

Application Deadline – December 2025

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Project Example: Article 33 - Mary Alley HVAC

- **\$6.26 Million** – Debt exclusion override request
- **Scope of Work**
 - Removal of existing Natural Gas heating system, replace with Air-source Heat Pump HVAC system
 - Installation of ventilation system
 - Replace Roof, add 5" of insulation, weatherization
 - ADA Upgrades: Elevator, Bathrooms, Access
 - New Sprinkler and Fire Alarm System
 - Removal of abandoned equipment
 - Asbestos abatement and removal



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Municipal Fleet Snapshot

- Vehicle Inventory: 153 Vehicles
- Average Vehicle Age: 2012, 13 Years

Light Duty (<8,500 lbs)

- 49 Vehicles
- Average MPG: 25 Combined (without EVs, 21)
- U.S. Average MPG: 26.9 Combined

Medium/Heavy Duty (>8,500 lbs)

- 104 Vehicles
- Includes DPW, Water & Sewer, Schools, Light, Fire



Photo Credit: Sustainable Marblehead

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Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) First Procurement Policy



- **Electric-First Commitment (Light duty):**
 - Starting FY27, all light-duty municipal vehicles must consider Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs) wherever feasible
 - Exemptions for emergency vehicles, heavy duty, and off-road. Light-duty exemptions require approval
- **Supports Town's Climate Goals:**
 - Advances Marblehead's Net Zero by 2040 target
 - Meets Green Communities Program standards
 - Completes goal of 2023 Net Zero Roadmap
- **Fleet Efficiency Standards:**
 - Requires fuel-efficient vehicle replacements
 - Reducing/optimizing fleet size where possible
 - Enforce anti-idling and responsible driving practices
- **Transition Plan & Funding:**
 - By FY27, the Town will complete a fleet transition plan
 - Sustainability Coordinator and Departments should jointly pursue grants and plan for EV-related capital investments

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Grading Rubric	
1. Public Utilities Experience	
Score	
1	Minimal or no direct experience in public utilities. May have worked in adjacent sectors (e.g., private energy, infrastructure) but lacks familiarity with municipal utilities or regulated environments.
2	Moderate experience in public utilities or similar regulated industries. Has held leadership roles in utilities or energy-adjacent sectors but not at an executive level in a municipal setting. Demonstrates some understanding of community-owned utilities or public power structures.
3	Extensive experience in public utilities, preferably in a municipal or community-owned electric utility. Has held senior leadership or general manager roles in such settings. Demonstrated understanding of regulatory compliance, rate setting, public accountability, and board relationships.
2. Technical Knowledge	
Score	
1	Limited technical background. May have unrelated educational background or lack of familiarity with energy systems, engineering, or grid operations.
2	Moderate technical knowledge. Holds a degree in engineering or technical field or has equivalent analytical skills. Some experience with electric system operations, power portfolio management, or renewable energy technologies.
3	Strong technical grounding. Holds an engineering or relevant technical degree, ideally with a master's in a related field. Demonstrated expertise in system management, grid modernization, decarbonization strategies, and power portfolio optimization. Can discuss technical aspects of operations with authority.
3. Proven Leadership (Strategic + Tactical + People Management)	
Score	
1	Little leadership experience. Has not managed large teams or complex projects. Limited evidence of strategic planning or labor relations skills.
2	Has led teams or departments, likely at a mid-management level. Some experience balancing short- and long-term strategic priorities. Moderate involvement in labor relations or team development.
3	Demonstrated senior leadership success, preferably as GM, CEO, or senior executive in a similar organization. Proven record of strategic visioning and tactical execution. Experienced in labor negotiations, succession planning, and building high-performing teams in a mission-driven environment.
4. Demonstrated Execution (Delivery of Results and Operational Effectiveness)	
Score	
1	Limited record of follow-through on operational goals. Few concrete outcomes or projects led to completion. Minimal experience managing budgets or capital projects.
2	Some track record of delivering results in operations, budgeting, or system upgrades. Evidence of follow-through on projects and stakeholder engagement, but may lack scale or complexity.
3	Strong record of executing complex initiatives successfully—e.g., infrastructure modernization, financial turnaround, or regulatory compliance programs. Demonstrated ability to manage risk, meet strategic goals, and lead effective, efficient operations over time.

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