

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE NEXT  
ESSEX ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
ESSEX TOWN HALL  
MARCH 13, 2013 - 4:00pm**

The Essex Economic Development Commission was held on Wednesday, March 13, 2013 at 4:00pm. In attendance were Lon Seidman, John Beveridge, Robert Laundry, Mark Sousa, Ed Cook(4:12Arrival) and Mark Uihlein. Also in attendance was Norman Needleman, First Selectman (Arrival 4:22pm) and Kelley Frazier, Secretary to the Board. Absent: David Winstead

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Seidman at 4:07pm.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Upon a motion made by John Beveridge and seconded by Mark Uihlein the Commission unanimously **VOTED** to approve the minutes from the March 2013 Essex Economic Development Commission meeting. Ayes: Mr. Beveridge, Mr. Uihlein, Mr. Seidman, Mr. Laundry. Abstentions: Mr. Sousa

Mr. Seidman requested the CL&P discussion be moved up to accommodate the attendees.

**CL&P Representative:**

Mr. Seidman addressed power outages with CL&P representatives and how it affects the businesses in town. Many Commission members voiced concerns regarding the recent power outages and the stability of the electrical system.

An audience member voiced frustration with losing productivity at his company. He may have to consider moving his company out of Essex. His corporate headquarters are in California and explaining the loss of equipment and productivity is difficult.

Mr. Cook asked what the power outages are due to? CL&P stated that the bulk of the outages are tree related events. The last two events have been from the large snowfalls. Staffing was discussed. CL&P stated that service is overseen by the Madison office. They said Madison is staffed adequately for day to day operations as well as routine maintenance. He noted that when there is an impending storm CL&P will pre-stage outside crews. Mr. Seidman asked what staffing was 20 years ago and if the process has changed from that time. CL&P said that the process is similar to what it was twenty years ago, but there are fewer linemen. They do not staff for high level storms but staffing that they need for day to day operations. They have mutual aid contracts with other companies to share resources during major outages.

Mr. Uihlein said that in recent times the number of outages seem to be accelerating exponentially. He stated that if this trend is going to continue, it would seem that what we are doing now is not adequate to getting people up and running in a timely manner. He asked how this was being addressed. CL&P stated that they do assess the needs and additional resources will be added to the Madison area if need be. They have a capital plan which will also improve the reliability of the system.

Mr. Seidman asked what the staffing levels are in the Madison region? CL&P stated that they currently have seventeen linemen for ten towns which include the shoreline from Branford to Old Saybrook up through Deep River and Killingworth. The crew compliments will vary with the nature of the work. The line department is responsible for poles and wires. Another CL&P area is responsible for maintenance and for the substations. There were no representatives from that group at the meeting. The representative was unsure what staffing levels were 20 years ago. He said we did have more crews in the past, but feels that for day to day operations, they are staffed adequately. He stated that there are updates to the infrastructure. During a major outage the process is to bring in extra crews and to prioritize who will be brought back up first. The Town will give a priority list. They first bring critical customers like hospitals and schools and then they look at the largest block of customers who repaired.

Mr. Seidman asked how many crews there were on staff day-to-day. CL&P responded that there are two linemen per crew and that there were approximately 8 crews staffing the entire region.

Mr. Beveridge asked about tree trimming. Mr. Needleman noted that CL&P has committed many resources to clearing trees, but some residents do not want trees taken down. He also feels that they only have about 30 percent of the linemen required.

He feels that this is a Senior Management discussion. He said that many poles are beyond their life expectancy. CL&P seems to manage by breakdown instead of being proactive. He stated that we can not afford bi-weekly outages for four to five hours.

Mr. Uihlein asked if we can require residents to be responsible if they do not take trees down? CL&P said that this is frustrating. Mr. Uihlein asked if we can lobby for this?

Mr. Needleman worries that a broad storm that hits multiple states may have outside crews going to other areas. CL&P said that they contract to ensure that crews come to Connecticut based on the projected model for outage locations and corrective actions that need to be done.

CLP stated that their Infrastructure Manager will address equipment which needs to be replaced. They will also do a detailed inspection of trees that need trimming. They have a plan which will allow budget dollars from FY2013-17 to address equipment upgrades and aggressive tree trimming. We should then see a major improvement in our system.

The Commission asked about EPA procedures when a transformer is struck. This was discussed in detail.

Mr. Beveridge asked if we should have our state representatives included in a meeting like this. Mr. Needleman feels that priorities are better organized and that things are on a better track.

Mr. Seidman addressed the problem with CL&P Customer Service not being able to tell customers when electricity will be restored and relying on our elected officials to relay the updates to townspeople. Kathy will follow up on this. Customers need better information. Mr. Cook experienced the same thing. He stated that business owners need to know the length of outage to make a decision as to what to do with their employees. Kathy will review the past few storm outages. It was noted that Customer Service can not give an accurate projection until a lineman has assessed the damage in person. They then do a global projection once an engineer and circuit people have assessed the problem and access the requirement for additional staffing. This may not happen until a crew is on site. CL&P will take back the Commission's feedback to his management. He noted that information is at the forefront to allow better business decision to be made.

Mr. Seidman thanked the CLP representatives for coming and listening to the Commission. He would like them to address staffing, maintenance and better customer service information given to customers. Cathy will email Mr. Seidman and come to the next meeting on April 10<sup>th</sup> at 4:00pm.

#### **REPORT FROM TOWN HALL**

No Update

#### **COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

##### **STEAP Grant Award**

This has been awarded. The firm has hired an in-house landscape architecture and engineering firm that has completed similar projects. Mr. Beveridge will assist in helping the landscape architect.

##### **Town Website Update**

The Town Website is up and running.

##### **Zoning Restaurant Changes**

The Zoning Hearing is March 18, 2103.

##### **CT Main Street Membership**

No Update

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Sousa said that Bell Power was recently sold to Superior Diesel. He would like to suggest that this Commission contact Superior Diesel and ask what they like or dislike about Essex and what it would take to keep them here. They have a branch

in Ohio. Their policy is not to make any major changes for one year. One of their concerns is expansion in their existing site. They have 60 employees. Mr. Seidman will write a letter to Superior Power.

**ADJOURNMENT**

On motion duly made and seconded, the Essex Economic Development Commission unanimously **VOTED** to adjourn at 5:14pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Kelley S. Frazier

Essex Economic Development Commission Clerk