

**AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION
AVON ROOM BLDG. #1 TOWN HALL
MINUTES
October 18, 2017**

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Bernard Zahren in the Avon Room, Building 1, Town Hall. Members present: Chairman Bernard Zahren, Joseph Gentile, Jeffrey Macel, Don Phelan and William Shea. Member absent: Richard Kretz. Advisory member absent: Jonathan Craig. Staff member Grace Tiezzi, Assistant to the Town Manager was also in attendance.

II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MEETING MINUTES – June 21, 2017

Mr. Zahren made an edit to the June 21, 2017 minutes.

Mr. Shea made a motion to approve the June 21, 2017 minutes as amended. Mr. Macel seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Mr. Zahren stated that this year marks the 10th anniversary of the Avon Clean Energy Commission. He stated that recently resigned member, Marty Kaplan, was a part of this Commission since its inception. A letter of appreciation from Town Manager, Brandon Robertson, on behalf of the Town Council was sent to Mr. Kaplan.

Mr. Zahren welcomed new member, Christine Winter to the Commission. Ms. Winter stated that she has been an Avon resident for the last 14 years and has three kids. Her background is in clinical psychology, although she is now retired. In terms of political involvement, she served on the Mansfield Board of Education for 12 years as well as the Regional Education Board at EASTCONN. Mrs. Winter stated that she cares a lot about the environment. At this point in her life, she feels like she has the time and energy to help in this capacity, knowing that the environment is the most important thing that anyone can work on and feels that she can accomplish something concrete at the local level.

III. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

None.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Microgrid RFP

Mr. Zahren referred to a memorandum dated October 12, 2017, from Brandon Robertson that outlines this project. It is moving along, although it still has some challenges. He stated that Mr. Macel and he went to the original interviews with the three finalists. Originally, there was interest from 28 firms although the Town only received three proposals. He stated that the Town is working with one proposer to bring a more complete package to the Town. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she is working toward having the revised package from that proposer for the November 3rd Town Council meeting. The Town is asking for the package to include a draft power purchase agreement for the Council's review; a general idea of the PPA rate; a 20 year cost avoidance schedule for the Town; as well as what the Town's responsibilities will be other than granting the easement and the purchasing of the power from the Microgrid. She stated that they will also want to know what the Town stands to gain in terms of resiliency and sustainability so they can balance those benefits with the cost savings on energy bills.

Ms. Winter questioned which proposal the Town was leaning toward going with. Mr. Macel stated that the preferred proposer has proposed a combination of solar and a gas turbine that will generate heat with a potential cooling component, although the Town does not have the thermal load to absorb this. There will

be additional energy created that does not have a "home" yet. Essentially, the Town will get kilowatt hours at a price. He stated that there was a proposed price, although there may be a fuel cost involved as well. These issues will get resolved in the updated proposal that Ms. Tiezzi has requested. Mr. Zahren stated that the proposal is for three smaller units, two at the Town Hall and one across the street at the fire station.

Mr. Gentile questioned if solar would also be used. Mr. Macel stated that they are proposing solar for rooftops on several Town buildings, although they will need to look at the structural engineering of the buildings. Mr. Gentile stated that there may be issues with some Town commissions regarding the style of any visible solar panels. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she has spoken to the Town Planner regarding this issue and they will go through the appropriate channels, if necessary, to get the needed approvals. Mr. Macel stated that the preferred proposer did consider this in their latest proposal. Mr. Zahren stated that during the first meeting with all three proposers in August, they learned that the state had added new incentives to the Microgrid program including a subsidy of \$1,000 per kilowatt for batteries, which is the approximate cost per battery. The preferred proposer included the free batteries into their proposal, which will allow the Town to run the solar during the day and charge the batteries from solar for the nighttime. Mr. Zahren stated that one of the redundancy issues is that if there is an extended outage, the natural gas might not be getting to the turbines, although the solar could work and charge a battery and keep at least a building like the Police Station up and running. Mr. Macel explained that if there was an extended outage, there could also be a shortage of gas; just because the Town has a Microgrid does not mean that the Town has an uninterrupted power supply.

Mr. Zahren stated that he feels the Town Council should consider, even if the Town is not saving a great deal of money on purchasing the energy at a discount, the redundancy of having a system that can be an island. The ability to become an island means that the Town Hall can be turned off completely from the grid. He stated that the ability to island for an extended period of time is a critical security issue for the Town. Ms. Winter asked if the Town Hall complex would become an emergency shelter during an extended outage. Mr. Macel stated that could possibly be an option.

If this proposal is accepted by the State, Mr. Zahren questioned if the Town is grandfathered in if they decided to expand the Microgrid to serve the new Town Center. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she is unsure, although she will ask the preferred proposer and/or the Town Attorney. Mr. Zahren stated that money for Microgrid subsidies was bonded in a separate place; the Governor cannot reallocate this money.

Regarding the Planning and Zoning Commission, Mr. Gentile stated that nothing has come before the Commission for the Town Center in terms of buildings, although the developer will be replanting the trees that were taken down. He stated that there are still plans to move forward with this project, although the timetable has been delayed. Prior to coming before the Planning and Zoning Commission, the developer needs to get approvals from the State DOT, the Wetlands Commission and the State DEEP. Getting these approvals all take time. Mr. Phelan asked if the developer's economic plan is still viable. Mr. Gentile stated that the developer continues to move forward. Ms. Winter stated that with this project slowing down, the Town could possibly get the developer to do some sustainable energy as part of the project. Mr. Gentile stated that the developer is aware of the Town's desire for low impact development. The Planning and Zoning Commission can suggest and recommend things such as sustainable energy, although they cannot force the developer to do them. The Commission has recently made an amendment to their Regulations to allow the increase in lot coverage for commercial and industrial areas if the developer puts in green initiatives. Ms. Tiezzi stated that, with approval from the Planning and Zoning Commission, a commercial or industrial property can increase its building coverage by a percentage from using different energy items such as Energy Star, solar arrays on parking covers, green roofs, permeable materials as well as connectivity improvements. She stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission saw this is a good tool to give the Town as well as developers flexibility. This is a win/win situation for everyone. The Town is hopeful that this regulation change will also help get new owners into some of the vacant buildings on Route 44.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that although the Town is still with Murtha Culina, they now have a new Town Attorney. She stated that Attorney Michaud has left to start his own practice. Attorney McDermott, who has a background in utilities, will be assisting the Town with the Microgrid project. Attorney McDermott is currently reviewing the draft PPA agreement. Mr. Shea commended Ms. Tiezzi and Mr. Peck; they are working well together and Ms. Tiezzi is doing a great job representing the Avon Clean Energy Commission.

Regarding Solar City, Ms. Tiezzi stated that Brent Eskay has left the company; she will now be communicating with Sarah Hill. Originally, Brent had stated that the Town would be receiving monitors, although this was not communicated to Sarah prior to his leaving. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she did locate the language regarding the monitors in the RFP. The Town will be receiving the monitors, although the Town has to purchase them and will be reimbursed by Solar City. The Town is now looking for specs from Solar City to ensure the correct monitors are purchased. The cost is approximately \$1,000 per monitor. The Board of Education is anticipating incorporating these monitors into their curriculum at the high school and middle school as well as the public works facility.

Mr. Zahren stated that, in cooperation with Eversource, the Town encouraged residents to do an energy audit at their residence. He stated that there is still no resolution with the State budget, but there is still a threat that the State is trying to take funds from the Energy Efficiency Fund or the Green Bank for things like energy audits. Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Town has been holding off on the effort to encourage more residents to take part in the energy audit because of the lack of a State budget. She will look into doing the press release soon.

Legislative Updates

Mr. Macel stated that nothing has changed since the last ACEC meeting. The Brownfield Bill did not pass; not a lot has been done since there is still not a State budget in place. He stated that the prohibition on solar on farmlands did pass, although the increase for net metering for brownfields did not pass. Ms. Winter stated that she believes net metering is likely to be active in the next session. Mr. Zahren stated that the Town has many places they could put solar, although if that parcel cannot use that energy, they are unsure if it can be net metered to another parcel.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Approve 2018 Meeting Schedule

Mr. Zahren asked that, going forward, if any Commission member is not able to attend a meeting that they notify Ms. Tiezzi within 48 hours of the meeting date.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Commission has cancelled their August meeting for the last two years because of a lack of a quorum. She stated that the Commission may want to consider making a revision to the 2018 meeting schedule. Mr. Zahren stated that the Commission usually considers the August meeting as a tentative meeting and feels that it should be left on the agenda.

Mr. Shea made a motion to approve the 2018 meeting schedule as drafted. Mr. Macel seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Mr. Zahren stated his concern regarding the national position relative to climate change. He stated that he read an article about why hurricanes have been much more severe, not just in terms of higher categories. The Houston storm set the all-time record for rainfall in North America; this was because of the temperature in the Gulf of Mexico was a record high of 86 degrees. Mr. Zahren believes that more attention is needed regarding this issue.

Mr. Macel stated that he recently read a book authored by Tom Freedman called, "Hot, Flat and Crowded", regarding the amount of carbon in the atmosphere, human behaviors and the trajectory we are

on and what we need to do to change that. He would recommend this highly researched book for those wanting a non-political viewpoint on having predictability in the future.

Ms. Winter stated that she is currently involved with Food and Water Watch, which is an initiative dedicated to banning the use of fracked waste in Towns within the State of Connecticut. This organization is trying to put a ban on importing fracked waste to not allow it to be processing and disseminated for use in the State. She stated that there are three toxic waste facilities in Connecticut that would like to purchase and partially process the waste and, in turn, sell it for road surface materials, de-icing materials, as well as for covering brownfields. She stated that Food and Water Watch is going Town by Town with petitions to get Towns to ban this product. There are currently 28 Towns that have already passed bans through an Ordinance. Ms. Winter stated that there will be an informational session at the Avon Library on November 8th. She encouraged everyone to sign the petition to get this same ordinance passed in Avon. Mr. Zahren stated that this is something that can be done by individual Commission members, although he is unsure if, as a Commission, they can endorse this initiative. Ms. Winter stated that she will email information to the Commission members.

VI. ADJOURN

Mr. Shea made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 p.m. Mr. Phelan seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted:
Chairman Bernard Zahren

Attest: Alison Sturgeon, Clerk