

AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
October 21, 2020

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m. by Chairman Zahren via GoToMeeting. Members present: Bernie Zahren, William Shea, Richard Kretz, Don Phelan. Members Absent: Christine Winter and Charles Harvell. Advisory member absent: Johnathan Craig. Staff member present: Grace Tiezzi, Assistant Town Manager.

II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MEETING MINUTES – February 19th

Mr. Shea made a motion to approve the February 19, 2020 minutes as written. Mr. Kretz seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

III. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE – None.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Avon Village Center /Microgrid Update

Mr. Zahren stated that back at their February meeting, there was a motion requesting that Town staff try to get some conduit put under the paving areas so that in the future a microgrid or renewable energy could be achieved within the development and that the Town would not be hindered by having to tear up any pavement. Ms. Tiezzi stated that the developer did not take their recommendation. The first phase of the development went forward as originally designed. In terms of the microgrid study, she stated that this will come into play prior to the approval of any additional applications for permits through the Planning and Zoning Commission. There is no timeline for the receipt of that study.

Mr. Zahren stated that he believed the Town was going to demand something on the microgrid before a new phase would be approved and asked if the developer was even working on the study at this time. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she is not aware of what is taking place between the developer and their engineering consultants in terms of the study. The Town cannot expect anything unless it is tied to an application. No application will be approved until the Town sees the study. Mr. Kretz stated that this is the biggest project that has come to the Town in a very long time and feels this was a great opportunity for the Town, especially from an uninterruptable power standpoint for the Town offices. He believes the Town is letting the developer do whatever they want. He questioned if the Town was even interested in this. Mr. Shea stated that although this is a setback and a disappointment, there are other great things that this Commission and Town are working on. There is still a lot of work to be done. He stated that putting the conduit in the road was a simple task that should have been accomplished; this was a huge missed opportunity. Mr. Phelan agreed with Mr. Shea.

Mr. Zahren stated that Carrie Firestone had previously offered to talk to Whole Foods as an outside advocate regarding all that the company does with sustainable energy. She tried twice to get something concrete from her Whole Foods contact, but that ended in a dead end and then the pandemic hit. He stated that Ms. Firestone's other events that this Commission supports were canceled as well.

Mr. Zahren stated that this is another disappointment; there will not be any solar panels on the major tenant in this development. After some research, it was discovered that one objective of Whole Foods and their parent company is to put solar PV on every store they have within a certain timeframe. He believes they would have supported this, although it may have been rejected because of Covid and other delays. He understands that the Town has no right to tell a developer what to do inside a building as long as they are meeting building codes. Solar is not inside; it is on the outside of the building. He also stated that the developer made the statement that Whole Foods did not want solar, although he disagrees. Again, this is another disappointment because it is too late to do anything at this point since the roof is already on.

Mr. Zahren stated that the Town should go to the developer to remind them that they promised the Town 3 acres for a microgrid instead of continuing dialogue about windmills that will never get permitted. He suggested that this Commission recommend that the Town explore taking that 3 acre piece of property and bring in someone that, at no cost to the Town, would give the Town a proposal to put in a microgrid. Mr. Shea agreed. He feels that this would be a win/win for everyone involved and feels this Commission should pursue it. If there are obstacles in the way of doing this, they should hear that from Town staff or someone involved.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that she will take this suggestion back to Hiram and Brandon. She stated that the Town is very supportive of this project, although they must operate inside of a legal framework that determines what a municipality can legally require a developer to do. If they try and require a developer to do something that is not in the Town's regulations or not codified in State law, this is where the Town would open themselves up to liability. She stated that everyone needs to recognize the circumstances which the Town is operating under.

Mr. Shea stated that Mr. Zahren's suggestion is an outstanding one and is right in line with the Commission's charge. He stated that their charge is to bring ideas, thoughts and strategies back to the senior management of the Town as well as to the related Boards and Commissions. He believes this suggestion should be given every consideration; the developer should honor what they have said they would do.

Sustainable CT Update

Mr. Shea stated that Ms. Tiezzi has been a great leader with Sustainable CT. She coordinated and led all of the department heads. The Commission members thanked Ms. Tiezzi for all of her hard work. Ms. Tiezzi stated that Mr. Shea was a great sounding board for the entire group and offered clarity of perspective. She stated that she has been in contact with the Sustainable CT team and is hopeful to hear within the next few weeks whether or not the Town will be certified.

Mr. Zahren stated that Mr. Shea had suggested at the last meeting to possibly get an intern to help Town staff with things like Sustainable CT. The Commission members agreed. Ms. Tiezzi stated that although Town staff is back in the office, they are not taking interns at the moment because of Covid. Last year, she did request funding from the budget for a graduate public policy intern from the University of Connecticut, although this was one of the items that was cut from the budget. She is unsure if this would be part of the Town's budget for the upcoming year, but for now, these things can be handled with the existing Town staff. They are always looking when the budget process gets

underway to see what they can do to make their operations run more smoothly. Mr. Shea stated that the senior management team should look at hiring someone permanently; half of their time could be spent on sustainability while the other half could be spent on business development. He stated that there are a lot of empty store fronts in Avon during the pandemic and these hard economic times. He feels that this would be taxpayer money well spent to get someone actively involved in these two areas.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Solar PV Array Five Year True-up

The Town recently reached a milestone in the life cycle of the solar arrays at Avon High School, Avon Middle School and the Department of Public Works that began production in the fall of 2015. If the arrays produce less electricity than estimated, the Town is paid for the difference between the actual production and the original estimate. As a result, the Town was issued a total refund for the last five years of \$14,095, which has been deposited in a capital projects account where it can be used for other energy efficiency related projects.

Electric Vehicle Charging Station Project & Hybrid Police Vehicles

Mr. Zahren stated that he is pleased to see the Town putting in a charging station. He questioned if this would be a free charge for patrons. Ms. Tiezzi stated that is yet to be determined; the Town is getting quotes for both scenarios. They will also need to look at how this will affect the electric bills at the library. They will include this in the library's budget request as recommended to the Town Manager, although it may or may not make it through to the end of the budget process.

Mr. Zahren questioned if a developer would be installing the charging station at their own expense and then take a portion of the patron revenue. Mr. Shea stated that he does not believe this can be done on Town owned property. It was stated that the Town of Simsbury has two charging stations in their town hall parking lot so it must be legal. Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Town is looking to purchase the charging stations but they are still determining the revenue model. They have also discussed this being free of charge, although if the electric bills are not what they are hoping for, they can switch over to the "pay to use" model. She stated that the Town is still working out these details.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the hybrid police vehicles should come in by December. These vehicles are the traditional hybrid models; they will not need to be plugged in. She is hoping it will be a nice "proof of concept" to use hybrids in other applications in the future. She will be sure to let the Commission members know once the vehicles arrive.

Eversource Home Energy Solutions Program

Ms. Zahren stated that Ms. Winter would like to make this program more known to Avon residents. Mr. Kretz stated that he recently took advantage of this Eversource program; he should be getting rebates for replacing his refrigerator as well as his air conditioning unit. He was very impressed with the whole program. Ms. Tiezzi stated that they did initially publish this program on the Town's website. She feels that there may be mixed responses to this program since there is some hesitancy to having strangers in their homes especially during winter with the pandemic. On the other hand, people are concerned with

the cost of energy because of their economic situation. She will look into other places to advertise this program or to possibly request that Eversource hold a virtual meeting. She will forward the information to the senior center coordinator as well.

Approval of 2021 Meeting Schedule

Mr. Shea made a motion to approve the 2021 ACEC meeting schedule as proposed. Mr. Phelan seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

VI. ADJOURN

Mr. Kretz made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:25 p.m. Mr. Phelan seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted:
Chairman Bernard Zahren

Attest: Alison Sturgeon, Clerk