

AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
June 15, 2022

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:22 p.m. by Chairperson Firestone in the Selectmen's Chamber at the Avon Town Hall. Members present: Christine Winter, Kim Stevenson, Carrie Firestone and Michael Dawson. Members absent: Bernie Zahren and Michael Guerrera. Staff member present: Grace Tiezzi, Assistant Town Manager.

II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MINUTES – May 18, 2022

Ms. Winter made a motion to approve the May 18, 2022 minutes as written. Mr. Dawson seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

III. COMMUNICATION FROM AUDIENCE – None

IV. COMMUNICATION FROM COMMISSION

Mr. Dawson stated that he had a virtual meeting with Bernie Pelletier and Mark Scully from PACE. They had the opinion that increasing the solar in regard to businesses should be done by a campaign through the Chamber of Commerce or by having events. He also had an idea that the Town of Avon could send out an announcement on Town letterhead about the Avon Clean Energy Commission and give information on the new Senate Bill 176 and the changes that will be put in place later this year. The letter can promote the free small business energy audit (SBEA) as well. He stated that PACE will give a free on-site solar analysis to businesses and they also reminded him of Project Sunroof, which is a fun tool that anyone can look at. They also thought it would be good to have an example of a business that already did the analysis and what they saved on their energy bills. PACE said they would make themselves available to support the efforts of this Commission.

Ms. Winter questioned if the Rotary Club would make sense in helping the Commission get the word out. Ms. Firestone stated that this is a great place to present community outreach. Mr. Dawson stated that the SBEA does an efficiency audit, but this could be used as a springboard for solar. This can be done in a way that is acceptable in terms of conflicts of interest.

Ms. Stevenson stated that the Small Business Energy Advantage Program is the business version of the home energy audit in terms of efficiency improvements; they also have a financing program through the payment of utility bills. She feels that Eversource would put money into a campaign for this Commission to start the process. Eversource and the efficiency programs do not market the solar programs. There is a conflict of interest between the efficiency side and the solar side. She feels that a separate effort is needed to promote solar efforts because it will not be promoted through the home energy program. Perhaps, she stated that PACE could provide third party technical assistance.

Ms. Winter stated that she feels this Commission should do both campaigns. She feels that once people take one step it usually leads to a second step. She questioned if the first phase should be efficiency followed by the solar. Mr. Stevenson stated that there is infrastructure in place for rapid deployment for both, although these two efforts do not work well together.

Mr. Dawson stated that he understands that SBEA only focuses on one thing; it is technically separate. He feels that even if SBEA is implemented first and that is all that happens, business owners will become more educated. He feels that even if there are different steps to the process, this would be a smarter approach.

Ms. Firestone questioned if this would be for big corporations or smaller locally owned businesses. Ms.

Winter suggested that they start with locally owned businesses.

In response to questions by Ms. Firestone regarding a Town wide mailing in terms of introducing themselves as a Commission and telling the community about their vision, Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Town has a contract with a printing vendor. Based on what they pay for the Town wide newsletter through bulk mailing, she feels confident that funds can be found for this type of mailing. Regarding the website, Ms. Firestone questioned if this Commission could have their own page. Ms. Tiezzi stated that there is a page already for this Commission, although it could be spruced up a bit. The Town's template will need to be kept the same, although it is flexible in terms of adding visuals, logos and links. Ms. Firestone questioned if this Commission could have their own separate page for their initiative and also use the same website as Bedford, NY. Ms. Tiezzi stated that they use different websites and platforms for different purposes with separate landing pages, although the only issue may be that websites become operating costs.

Ms. Winter questioned if the energy audit efficiency would be paid for by Eversource for any businesses that wanted to participate. Mr. Dawson stated that the SBEA is free and the home energy audit costs \$50. Ms. Winter questioned if there was a mechanism to help pay for the solar aspect. Ms. Stevenson stated that contractors put the solar on for owners. As a business owner, they would want to get three bids. This is where the solarize initiative and the map process comes in. Mr. Dawson stated that PACE said they would do a ball park analysis. Ms. Winter stated that this Commission needs to lead a solar campaign for businesses.

Ms. Stevenson stated that PACE did the segmentation of what the energy costs are in Avon and the different markets. She stated that at some point, they will need a high level market segmentation of the businesses in Avon. Bigger businesses will be thinking much differently than small business. The Commission members need to figure out who to target and how to target each of the segments.

Mr. Dawson volunteered to be the point person for the business; Ms. Firestone will be the point person for the residential.

Ms. Stevenson suggested that Mr. Dawson contact someone at the Renewable Energy Business Association of CT (REEBA). REEBA is the convening organization for all of the energy service providers and contractors in the state that are doing energy work.

V. OLD BUSINESS

Connecticut Green Bank Solar Marketplace Assistance Program – Status Update

At this time, the PPAs have been executed and the Green Bank is finalizing the onboarding of its construction partner. A kick off meeting with Town and Board of Education staff and the Green Bank team is being scheduled at this time.

Development of Vision, Goal Setting & Possible Revision of Charge – Discussion

Ms. Firestone stated that she feels the Commission members should all think about the idea of expanding the Charge to make it more comprehensive beyond clean energy. She talked with some of the Town Council members regarding expanding it to a more comprehensive conservation, clean energy and conserving eco-systems including land in Avon. She asked that each member personally think about how they see this Commission as leaders in this realm and in the community.

Ms. Firestone stated that she would like to propose, moving forward, home tours and more engaging community involvement.

Impact of Global Events on Local Energy Markets – Status Update

Ms. Firestone stated that this could be part of their forum series.

Green Up Avon Sustainability Initiative – Planning Session

Ms. Firestone stated that the Eversource representative that she spoke with stated that she would willing to come to a Commission meeting, although she feels that it would be more productive for her to speak at their first library forum about Energize CT, possibly in early August. The Commission members agreed.

For each smaller initiatives as part of Green Up Avon, Ms. Firestone suggested having one forum at the library and then some sort of related event. As they prepare over the summer months to get the word out through graphics and email blasts, she suggested also having an in-person event. A follow up to the Energize CT forum could be a back to school event where they could invite the Energize CT movable van to come and also invite the community to look and explore. She stated that with each smaller initiative, they could encourage the community to do some research; the Commission members can put together articles and books about the subject so people can be more educated. She suggested having one member of the Commission gather and store this information.

Ms. Firestone stated that they will have a board/sign showing how many people sign up for the energy audit. The Commission members felt there should be several signs in high traffic areas, possibly at the public library and at the senior center.

Ms. Firestone stated that she will commit to drafting the initial letter introducing the Avon Clean Energy Commission and their energy audit initiative. Ms. Tiezzi stated that Eversource has helped with communication and mailings in the past. Ms. Firestone stated that she will contact Energize CT about the mailings and booking the forum as well.

Ms. Winter questioned if they could incorporate Energize CT flyers when candidates go on their door knocking campaign. The Commission members agreed that this should be done separate from election door knocking campaigns. Ms. Stevenson stated that there is an organization called Neighbor to Neighbor; they do door knocking campaigns and community organizing. She believes that Eversource funds them as well.

Ms. Firestone stated that she feels the Commission should set a goal between now and September to work as individuals as well as together to get the word out. She will set the forum and the back to school display. In between, they will have emails and graphics sent out. She questioned if they should also set a goal of a certain number of houses to participate in the audit. Ms. Winter stated that they should have an accurate read on things that are already in place, including heat pumps that are already installed. She stated that they need a set baseline so they can measure the progress.

Ms. Firestone stated that Eversource informed her that this Commission should reach out to the contractors to touch base with them to let them know that this campaign will be ongoing in Avon. She asked that one member of the Commission be the point person to get on to the Energize CT website and reach out to the contractors. Ms. Stevenson suggested doing a request for qualifications (RFQ). She stated that there are different levels of qualifications. They should have someone who is BPI certified, who is reliable and does good quality work. She stated that she would volunteer to go through the list. Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Town cannot put out a list of recommended contractors, but if they are putting out an RFQ, they can send it out to recommended bidders. Ms. Tiezzi questioned that if the contractors are already pre-qualified through Eversource, would this Commission need to do this as well. The Commission discussed the process of the home energy audit and what steps the homeowners would need to go through to get the audit, the list of recommendations of what needs to be done, and then to actually get that work done.

Ms. Firestone suggested that the Commission plan to do just an educational campaign this summer. They can tell homeowners how to start to get their homes to be more efficient. She stated that the goal is to get as many people signed up as possible. The Commission members agreed that this was a good first step. Ms. Firestone stated that she will also draft something for their first initiative.

Ms. Stevenson stated that it is 8 years between now and 2030. If this Commission wants 100% of households to get audits within that timeframe, that equates to 8 percent per year. She questioned if it would be realistic to target 10% of the homes in Avon each year. She also questioned how many residences there were in Town. Ms. Tiezzi stated that there are approximately 7,000 households, which would equal 700 home per year. Ms. Firestone suggested to start with getting people signed up and then reaching out, after September, to those people who have not yet signed up.

Ms. Winter suggested that they emphasize energy costs and inflation as an extra motivator to sign up. She also suggested inviting a panel of people to the forum who have already done the audit to speak and show photographs.

Ms. Winter volunteered to put together articles, books, etc. that have to do with energy audits and be the keeper of all of this. Ms. Stevenson suggested getting articles from Eversource as well; the Clean Energy State's Alliance also has some great resources for both residential and business.

VI. NEW BUSINESS – None.

VII. ADJOURN

Mr. Dawson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m. Ms. Winter seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted:
Chairperson Carrie Firestone

Attest: Alison Sturgeon, Clerk