

AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
August 16, 2023

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:12pm by Chairperson Carrie Firestone in the Avon Room at the Avon Town Offices. Members Present: Carrie Firestone, Bernie Zahren, Christine Winter, Michael Dawson. Student Member Present: Anagha Bhumireddy. Members Absent: Michael Guerrero, Daniel Carvalho. Staff Member Present: Grace Tiezzi, Assistant Town Manager.

II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEEDING MINUTES

On a motion from Ms. Firestone and a second from Mr. Dawson, the commission unanimously voted to table the minutes of the July 19, 2023 meeting until the September 20, 2023 meeting.

III. COMMUNICATION FROM AUDIENCE - None

IV. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

Ms. Firestone stated a conflict with the October commission meeting date and asked to either not meet that night or choose a different night. Ms. Winter suggested an alternative date to meet. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she could see if the commission could move the meeting to the library to accommodate Ms. Firestone's conflict. Mr. Firestone additionally suggested not meeting in December because there are a lot of events coming up and it would be good to recharge the batteries.

V. OLD BUSINESS

a. Town-wide Energy Plan – Visioning & Goal Setting

Ms. Firestone asked the commission to participate in an exercise to be recorded by Ms. Tiezzi and shared with each member after the meeting.

b. Green Up! Avon Sustainability

Ms. Firestone suggested the commission start with an update about the Avon Sustainability initiative with Mike Murray. Ms. Tiezzi stated the initiative was kind of stagnant, but she did get a phone call from a woman who wanted to know how to sign up for the audits that Avon is offering.

Ms. Tiezzi stated she sent out Eblasts on the website and continues to share on Facebook. Ms. Tiezzi also spoke to Jen Bennett at the Senior Center about a late afternoon or early evening event where we can feed people, they will come and that way we'd kind of pick-up people that work during the day or do childcare. Ms. Tiezzi stated she told Ms. Bennett she would see how the commission felt about that and then circle back with Ms. Bennett about when and content. Ms. Tiezzi stated that it might help to have Mike Murray there as he is the person doing the audits. Ms. Firestone asked about the seniors that don't get on social media or the website. Ms. Tiezzi stated she would contact Ms. Bennett about a date to meet. Ms. Firestone stated that a Senior Center event would allow for addresses to be crossed off the door-to-door list. Ms. Tiezzi stated the attendees could sign in with their address.

Ms. Stevenson asked if there are neighborhood groups so that someone that has done one of these can share their experience as a neighborhood initiative. Ms. Tiezzi stated that Recreation was running a block party contest. Ms. Firestone stated that the Northington neighborhood has their own newsletter. Ms. Tiezzi stated there are also homeowners' associations.

Ms. Stevenson stated that in reviewing the data from Ms. Tiezzi, it was noticed that there are neighborhoods that are served by oil and neighborhoods served by gas, so how you treat those properties is going to be different which is another reason to do this geographically. Ms. Winter stated she was intrigued by Ms. Stevenson's comment about prioritizing oil homes. Ms. Stevenson stated that oil costs more, so those people are going to have a greater incentive to convert to heat pumps. Ms. Winter stated that the much older homes are probably also the most deficient in terms of insulation. Ms. Firestone stated that she doesn't think people understand that if you just start with the basic assessment; it's the same \$50 whether you go with the cheaper company or expensive company, and somehow sell that to people. Ms. Winter stated she remarked that they do have that reputation of being expensive, but making people understand that this company is the conduit for a particular service, it's not like their selling something.

Discussion continued regarding misinformation that companies are providing and how to lobby for these companies to be educated. Ms. Stevenson stated this may be a topic for D.E.E.P. to take on because they're going to be managing all the incentives that are coming in through the Inflation Reduction Act, which are going to be focused on clean electrification. Ms. Stevenson stated as those funds become available, they will have to address that and the energy efficiency fund does have a group of people with focus expertise on heat pump technology, and they approve the contractors, like Aiello is approved through the utility company, so it seems like they would be the natural convener for doing the educating and setting the standards. Ms. Firestone agreed.

Ms. Stevenson stated there are other maintenance issues that will need to be addressed like refrigerant leaks. Ms. Firestone stated that she felt like the community is not ready to start

proselytizing heat pumps. Mr. Zahren stated that the drawdown problems are like 1,000 times worse than CO₂, like air conditions, for example, they leak, and they start to drip and then they vaporize, and they're horrible pollutants for the atmosphere. Ms. Firestone stated that as a municipal group, there is much to learn before we get to that.

Ms. Firestone stated she set aside time in September to door knock but could also take some that time to call people and asked if anyone else on the commission wanted to get out there for door knocking. Ms. Bhumireddy stated she would do it. Ms. Tiezzi stated she would update and make more copies of the flyer. Ms. Firestone asked that the commission work on a script, obtain the updated flyers and aim to start the face-to-face interactions in September. The commission congratulated Ms. Bhumireddy for completing her school project. Ms. Tiezzi asked if Ms. Stevenson needed the data broken down more and stated she would speak to the GIS manager to work on a map of the average age of buildings and fuel type. Ms. Winter inquired about the Farmington Woods complex. Ms. Stevenson stated they are all electric heat there and that would be a goldmine for conversions.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Italian Club has an event called La Festa or even the Lions Club has a carnival coming up. Ms. Winter stated one event that gets a lot of attention is the library book sale. Ms. Firestone stated that even if the library would allow for an event on the grass. Ms. Stevenson asked if banners or signs could be displayed. Ms. Tiezzi suggested a tree as the symbol. Ms. Bhumireddy stated there could be laminated leaves that get added. The commission agreed a tree would be perfect. Ms. Tiezzi stated she would speak to Glen at the library to put it in the lobby. Ms. Firestone agreed the lobby would be fine and pictures could be posted periodically to the Facebook page. Ms. Bhumireddy stated the Art National Honor Society was founded by her friends last year and they do lots of community charity work. Ms. Firestone asked Ms. Bhumireddy to ask them to make the tree.

Ms. Winter stated there was a suit brought by a bunch of kids Montana who basically claimed they were entitled to clean water and air and they won the suit. Ms. Firestone stated there are wins happening, and as a novice group they need to just keep trying. Ms. Stevenson shared some information about the regenerative agriculture program she is starting in September at Mount Wachusett Community College. Ms. Firestone shared her social media experimentation to show the importance of meeting people where they are regarding events and engagement.

c. Fall/Winter 2023 Programming Schedule

Ms. Firestone shared the upcoming event dates that were referenced in the agenda packet sent to the commission and will be updated and shared by Ms. Tiezzi.

d. Ongoing Project Updates

i. CT Green Bank Solar Marketplace Assistance Program

Ms. Tiezzi stated the installation of the solar panels at Roaring Brook is proceeding and the work at High School is following closely behind.

ii. EV Charging Stations

Ms. Tiezzi has a supplemental appropriation request for the Town Council and the Board of Finance to consider at their September meetings for the towns contribution which is about \$7,200. Ms. Tiezzi stated the total is about \$40,000. Mr. Dawson asked how many charging stations. Mr. Tiezzi confirmed the amount for just one charging station. Ms. Tiezzi stated there is an \$11,000 grant from D.E.E.P. and \$20,000 in Eversource incentives, so the towns cost is \$7,200 and the library board will be funding the annual upfront cost of about \$5,000. Ms. Zahren stated the charging won't be free. Ms. Tiezzi confirmed there will be a charge to use the charging station. Ms. Firestone asked if there could be a ribbon cutting for the EV charger and the tree at the same time. Ms. Tiezzi stated that could be a possibility.

VI. NEW BUSINESS-NONE

VII. ADJOURN

Ms. Winter motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:02pm. Mr. Dawson seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted:
Chairperson Carrie Firestone

Attest: Nicole Chambers, ACEC Clerk