

**AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION
AVON ROOM BLDG. #1 TOWN HALL
MINUTES
August 15, 2018**

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chairman Bernard Zahren in the Avon Room, Building 1, Town Hall. Members present: Chairman Bernard Zahren, Don Phelan, William Shea, Christine Winter, Venkata Anupaju, Richard Kretz and Jeffrey Macel. Advisory member present: Jonathan Craig. Staff member present: Grace Tiezzi, Assistant to the Town Manager.

II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MEETING MINUTES – June 20, 2018

Mr. Kretz made a motion to approve the June 20, 2018 minutes as written. Mr. Phelan seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

III. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE – None.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Discussion: Multi-Town Initiative

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the multi-town initiative last met in June and will meet again in the fall.

Legislative Updates

Mr. Zahren stated that there is a process underway and several lawsuits have been filed involving monies from the Green Bank and the Energy Efficiency Fund. He questioned what the final impacts are on Avon from a standpoint of State funding that has or has not been restored. Ms. Tiezzi stated that the estimates that were used to create the FY19 budget were fairly accurate.

Mr. Macel stated that Senate Bill 9 passed and the PURA proceeding will start. Once this passes, it may open up a new round for solar. He stated that the RFP is out and bids will be accepted in September; this will be the last zrec lrec since a new program will be replacing it. Mr. Zahren explained the definition of srec, which is a solar credit that the utility gets to meet the standard of a certain amount of their total power coming from customers. This program has been in place for a number of years, although it is now coming to an end.

Mr. Shea stated that many Towns are closing their landfills. He questioned why solar cannot be put on this land. Mr. Macel stated that this is a very challenging concept. There was a brownfield bill last year that would have allowed net metering on brownfields. One of the challenges of landfills is that they are permitting intensive. It has been found that many Towns and private owners were not vigilant in closing out all of the final permits when closing a landfill; a Post Closure Use Permit, which most Towns still need, is very costly.

Board of Education Energy Tracking

Ms. Tiezzi stated that she, Mr. Robertson and Mr. Williams met with Dr. Carnemolla, Superintendent of Schools as well as Myles Altimus, BOE Director of Operations to discuss the Board of Education's energy tracking methods and the possibility of them migrating to a system similar to what the Town uses. She stated that the Board of Education does not currently use an electronic system, although they do perform a detailed review of their bills each month. She stated that they have 6 electric meters to track in which they look at weather trends, patterns, etc. Mr. Altimus received a quote for a software package, although they determined that there would not be a cost benefit to purchasing that energy tracking software.

Based on their overall conversation, Ms. Tiezzi stated that it was determined that the Board of Education is doing a lot of work using their own methods. However, moving forward, Mr. Williams will look at the Town's software to see if they can add the Board of Education's meters at a minimal or no cost.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that Mr. Altimus also drafted a memo with the Board of Education's most recent energy projects that have been completed, which was distributed to the Commission members in their packets. She stated that those projects included several HVAC projects and a lighting conversion, which was funded through the Town's capital budget last year. The BOE will continue to make requests going forward.

Mr. Zahren stated that it is important to get the Board of Education and the Town onto one system since their 6 buildings use more energy than most of the Town's buildings combined. In terms of the comprehensive plan, all of this data needs to be incorporated into the total. Regarding the lighting conversion, Mr. Craig stated that his employer received an interest free loan through Eversource to do this. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she will look into this. She stated that historically, when the Town does lighting upgrades, they will apply for rebates once the project has been completed. Ms. Winter questioned if there was a program in place where these rebates can be put back into an account to pay for other energy efficiency project. Ms. Tiezzi stated that funding for the lighting upgrade project came from a capital account, which is where the rebate money is held; rebates usually only fund a portion of a project. Ms. Winter also believes that savings from these projects should be used to advance other goals. She feels if they are making efforts that are saving the Town money, they should be reaping as much of the benefits as possible.

Regarding the Town Center project, Ms. Tiezzi stated that Phase I was approved with approximately two pages of conditions by the Planning and Zoning Commission at a recent meeting. Phase I will include residential and commercial as well as land for recreation and a trail project. Construction will tentatively begin this fall. She stated that the Town continues to work with their peer review architects and engineers; they are pushing, at a staff level, for sustainable energy efficient components in terms of the construction when it is practical and cost efficient.

Mr. Zahren stated that the bonded money for the microgrid is still in a "lock box" where it cannot be used for anything except subsidies for microgrids. Although the money is still there, the DEEP has not reopened another bid for microgrids. Since Avon is starting work on their new Town center, he suggested notifying the DEEP to make another request. Mr. Macel stated that this may be a hard time to inquire about this because of the upcoming elections. Ms. Tiezzi stated that it seems that the current Governor is putting out a lot of grant funding prior to leaving office. There have been a lot of grant applications that the Town of Avon has submitted for certain projects in other agencies within the past year and a half. Those agencies are finally getting back to the Town asking them to either resubmit their applications or submit any progress or changes to the project. She is unsure if this will extend to the microgrid program.

Kim Stephenson, who works for the Connecticut Green Bank, stated that if this Commission would email their questions regarding the microgrid funding to her, she would be happy to take them to the Green Bank's Co-Chair, who also is the DEEP Commissioner.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Goal Setting

Mr. Zahren stated that this Commission has completed their goal of reducing the Town's energy use, as defined by the Titan Energy update. This was not about saving money. He stated that they used the metric of BTU per square foot of space for each of the Town facilities; they converted electricity, diesel and gas, and natural gas into an equivalent BTU into a common denominator. Their goal was to reduce the total average, per square foot, over all facilities by 15%. This concluded in 2015 and was very successful since they reduced their energy use by almost 20%. He stated that they have not updated anything in the way of a formal plan since then.

In terms of setting goals, Mr. Shea stated that he would like to see education and communication and informing the public of what could be done one of this Commission's top priorities. The Town's newsletter is an outstanding document that is mailed to everyone in Town. He suggested that the Town newsletter would be a great way to get this information out, as well as the Town's website. A portion of the newsletter could be dedicated to educating companies, industries and citizens on energy efficiency. This Commission needs to do the best job they can in Avon with educating and informing the citizens as to what this Commission does; he does not believe the community is currently aware. Mr. Shea stated that this should be something they do that is very consistent; it should be the way they do business. He stated that people are trying to save money in their homes. This should be a consistent efficient message about how to educate and inform the community as to how they can become more energy efficient. This needs to start internally with this Commission. Mr. Shea does not feel this Commission can build a foundation to accomplish their goals if they do not first educate and inform Avon's citizens. Ms. Tiezzi believes that the Town newsletter would be a great vehicle to do this. She would like to see something in the newsletter from the Clean Energy Commission in every newsletter, as well as on the Town's website. She will need input from the Commission members in order to do this; something that they believe is worth sharing. Mr. Shea believes they should start with the Town's successes in terms of what they have done with energy efficiency.

Mr. Zahren stated that, knowing the landscape of where this country is politically and fundamentally, he questioned if this Commission feels that they should try to educate the residents of Avon that there is a serious challenge from climate change and therefore, their goals are their local contribution to the bigger effort in saving the planet? Or should they simply continue as it has been to date, in terms of saving money. He questioned what their real focus should be. Ms. Winter stated that, in terms of selling behavior change, she feels that this Commission is better off educating residents on the positive steps people can take. The more small steps people make, she believes, the more it will awaken their investment and curiosity of the whole topic. Mr. Craig agreed with educating with positive messages. If this Commission tells residents all of the things that the Town has already accomplished, even more can be done with their help. He would like to see stories that catch people's interest in the newsletter as well as little known facts.

Ms. Winter stated she met with Melissa Everette, who thought it would be extremely beneficial for this Commission to get the most out of their efforts if they would engage in a spreadsheet approach, which she distributed to the Commission members. This would be a way to help them stay organized as well as to have a list of action items that they may be interested in. Other recommendations from Melissa were to try and stay focused on positive actions; to build on past successes; to use their power of influence about energy issues; to attend other Town Commission and Board of Education meetings; to re-approach the microgrid topic and possibly approach the industrial complex across the street from the Town center project; as well as to do more with education as Mr. Shea discussed. She stated that there will be a talk regarding the Paris Climate Change Agreement. She feels that this Commission should get involved in making a presentation in terms of what the Town of Avon has been doing.

Ms. Winter stated that Mr. Peck discussed strengthening their Zoning Regulations at a recent Planning and Zoning meeting. She believes that this is something the Clean Energy Commission should be involved in.

Mr. Macel stated that this Commission implements the Comprehensive Energy Management Plan and looks at ways to talk about sustainability and education. This is where their mandate stops. It does not talk about climate or environment. He feels that this Commission should have a statement regarding clean energy and why it is important. They should have a general statement that is ideological in nature. This will help the Commission when issues come before them, in determining whether or not it is an important topic for them to look at and discuss. This Commission should come up with an ideological statement as well as economical statement. Laying the ideological and economic framework over things will give them a great starting point as they re-determine their goals and mission. Mr. Macel stated that they also need to look at what their charge is and inventory their energy usage, which they have done in

the past. They need to determine where they use the most energy; the schools are a massive part of the Town's energy use. Mr. Macel stated that this Commission has done great things to create a cleaner source of generation. They could also take an inventory of the largest energy uses to find ways for them to have the greatest impact on the energy level. They could also look at an analysis of the programs that are out there as well to find ways to educate this Commission going forward. He stated that there are strong members with strong abilities on this Commission and they should find ways to grow that.

Mr. Anupoju stated that he agrees that education should be a major goal of this Commission, starting with the Town first. The Planning and Zoning Commission, he feels, are not on the same page as this Commission regarding carbon footprint as well as other issues. He feels that they should also educate not only the residents of the Town, but also the other Boards and Commissions. The Commissions need to be educated so they do not approve applications that come before them without looking into energy efficient options. He stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission is a powerful commission; they have the authority to implement conditions on builders. He feels they need to exercise this power more often when approving applications. Mr. Anupoju stated that he would like to see the Avon Clean Energy Commission have a booth at Celebrate Avon, where they can talk to Avon's residents and hand out pamphlets to educate resident on the importance of this Commission and the issues they continue to work towards.

Mr. Anupoju stated that another issue this Commission should be concerned with is idling. He stated that recently, there was an incident where a police officer pulled over a vehicle on Route 44, which created a major traffic jam. Cars were sitting idle for several miles up Route 44. He feels this situation could have been avoided if the officer did not block and restrict the use of that lane to let the traffic flow. Education on idling would be a benefit for the whole community. Ms. Tiezzi stated that everything the police do is typically governed by specific procedures; their primary concern is safety. She stated that idling is something that a lot of people do, but not necessarily realize it is a problem.

Mr. Anupoju stated that there are private recycling companies in Town that do not accept some plastics in the recycling bins. These plastics routinely end up in the trash instead of being recycled. Ms. Tiezzi stated that since residents negotiate their own garbage and recycling pick up with private companies and the Town does not have a contract for this, private vendors cannot be forced into do anything. She stated that the Town might be able to broach the subject with some of these vendors regarding this issue. She stated that this also is part of the education component.

Mr. Phelan stated that he focused more on the Commission's Charge when thinking about setting goals. He stated that the first part of their Charge states, "Continue to pursue the goals as identified in the Comprehensive Energy Management Plan as adopted in 2012...". This was 6 years ago; these goals have already been accomplished. He stated that, as the other Commission members have discussed, he also feels that education is very important.

Mr. Phelan stated that he would like Avon to become a more bicycling friendly community. The Towns of Farmington and Simsbury are both bronze and silver members of the Bicycle League of America. He feels that this is also an important aspect to the community for people who are thinking of moving to Avon.

Mr. Kretz stated that the spreadsheet that was distributed by Ms. Winter could be used as a format. He encouraged each of the Commission members, including Mr. Robertson and Ms. Tiezzi, to email him their long and short term goals. He will put this information into this spreadsheet and will send it to Ms. Tiezzi for editing.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the next Town newsletter will be printed in September for distribution to residents in October. Mr. Phelan volunteered to write a piece about bicycles for the newsletter. Ms. Tiezzi suggested including the new bike trail in his article.

Regarding the education component, Mr. Kretz suggested getting school aged kids involved. He would like to see if the new Superintendent of Schools could get a program started for environmental sciences or clean energy that starts in elementary school and continues throughout student's high school years. This can also be done to educate boy scouts and girl scouts in terms of merit badges. He would also like to look into scholarship programs that they can find funding for. Regarding short term goals, Mr. Kretz would like to continue to look into the microgrid, bike paths, and solar incentives for other Town properties. In terms of long term goals, he stated that microgrids and bike paths would again fall under this category; as well as looking into the chemicals on the roadways to determine what it is and what it does to the ground water. He also suggested that this Commission look into electric police cars. Mr. Kretz also agrees that educating other boards and commission, as well as residents, should be part of the education process.

Mr. Shea stated that all of these topics they have discussed tonight from each of the Commission member are affordable, achievable goals.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Town Council enjoys hearing from other boards and commission when they have completed projects or have achieved something. Ms. Winter asked if each department head could make energy goals a part of their budget talks. Mr. Shea suggested that they ask each department, when looking at their respective capital and operating budgets, to come up with energy efficient ideas; they can try to make this a part of their dialogue between the departments and the management. Ms. Tiezzi stated that all departments try to keep energy efficiency in mind when doing projects and upgrades. Ms. Winter suggested reaching out to each department to let them know what this Commission has already accomplished, what their goals are, and ask each department for suggestions.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that once the spreadsheet is filled in with their long and short term goals, she will circulate it to the department heads. The Commission members can discuss this again at the October meeting.

VI. DO ANY BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS MEETING – None.

VII. ADJOURN

Mr. Shea made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m. Mr. Macel seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted:
Chairman Bernard Zahren

Attest: Alison Sturgeon, Clerk