

**AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION  
AVON ROOM BLDG. #1 TOWN HALL  
MINUTES  
AUGUST 19, 2015**

**I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:56 PM by Chairman Bernard Zahren in the Avon Room, Building 1 Town Hall. Members present: Chairman Bernard Zahren, Marty Kaplan, Joseph Gentile, Jeffrey Macel, Brian Glenn, Richard Kretz and Mitch Kennedy. Members absent: none. Advisory member present: Jonathan Craig. Also in attendance was staff member Town Clerk Ann Dearstyne.

**II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MEETING MINUTES – Apr. 15, 2015**

Mr. Zahren requested minor wording changes to sections III and VI. With no other comments a vote was taken.

**VOTE:** Mr. Kaplan motioned, Mr. Gentile seconded and all agreed to accept the April 15<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes with the changes. None opposed.

**III. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE**

Walter Micowski, V.P. & Marketing of Geothermal Systems & Power Generation, introduced himself and his company and offered if he could be of any assistance to the commission and possibly work together to try to get some incentives from the legislature this fall. Mr. Zahren hoped that some of the topics he and Mr. Micowski had previously discussed could be applied to the geothermal system at the town library. Ms. Dearstyne noted that she had discussed the geothermal problems at the library with Mr. Robertson and that it was not getting any better. Mr. Micowski relayed that he had left a message with Public Works and was waiting to hear from the Library Director in hopes of everyone getting together to discuss a solution. Mr. Zahren reminded that the system was chosen at the urging of the Commission because it helped in meeting the LEED silver certification requirements. Mr. Zahren added that he was also having the same problem with his own home system in the winter time with over running the electric to heat the place. Overall he said that he has a smaller electric bill than what he would have had he not installed the geothermal system and windmill. Mr. Zahren urged too that now was the time to lobby the legislature for better renewable legislation come the 2016 session.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS: a. Update on Solar City, b. Data accumulations from Town and BOE**

Mr. Glenn reported that the solar panels were up with no complaints or accidents. Ms. Dearstyne concurred that they were up and running and noted that there was a small change to the size at one of the schools. Mr. Zahren requested a formal dedication or grand opening after school starts, at around Avon Day or later, and to include a press release. He continued that this by far was our biggest achievement to date. Mr. Zahren noted that the school board was really the one to organize it as this was really going to benefit the budgets of the schools and asked if Mr. Glenn would lead this effort and include the Town as well. Mr. Zahren continued that he'd like to see the solar output for thirty days. Mr. Macel guessed that the solar panels were probably

connected with Eversource in July. Mr. Zahren reminded that part of the project was for the educational benefit as well.

Ms. Dearstyne reported that Mr. Robertson was working with Peregrine Energy on data collection from both sides and the amounts should be available at the end of 2015. Mr. Macel offered that he could provide all of the information that was tabulated from the town's 28 accounts including the school's as his company applied for the RFP as part of the bid to get the solar photovoltaic systems, prior to his joining the Commission.

V. NEW BUSINESS: a. 2015 goals and data for Clean Communities, b. Follow-up on Solarize Avon, c. New master plan for the future, d. Regional meetings of town energy commissions, e. New town center development

Mr. Zahren reminded that Peregrine provided a baseline for all of the buildings back in 2008. He continued that the goal was to reduce the energy use per square foot by 15%, noting the library was not in the numbers and would still have to be added. Mr. Zahren was optimistic that we had met that goal and would be able to measure it by the end of the year. He added that this was different from the goal of reducing carbon emissions 20% by 2020. Mr. Kaplan reminded that the Green Bank could help us with the data accumulation. Mr. Zahren passed a survey to Ms. Dearstyne for the town that he suggested could potentially be used towards points for grants.

Ms. Dearstyne updated the number for the Solarize Avon program: 240 leads, 176 were qualified homes and 33 signed contracts with 312.375kW total. Mr. Zahren noted his disappointment in the number of sign-ups for solar systems through the Solarize program and felt that it was largely the company's fault. Ms. Dearstyne reminded that there were still people who signed up after the program that were not reflected in the numbers.

Mr. Zahren reflected on the broad expertise represented by the Commission members, adding that he felt that this was a pivotal moment to make a major difference. He told of a January conference he attended in Bedford NY that had 70 booths that ran the gamut of composting, recycling, organic gardening and solar and geothermal providers. He continued that the State of New York was promoting incentives with utilities and grant monies and could be a good support. Mr. Kaplan noted that all of New York was trying to emulate the town of Bedford.

Mr. Zahren posed how aggressive or ambitious the Commission should be and what did we want to do. He continued that the town needed to have the political will and personnel to work with us and asked the members what should we be doing going forward. Mr. Glenn questioned the status of the town center development. Ms. Dearstyne offered that the developers hadn't signed anything as of yet. Mr. Zahren said the development would provide a great opportunity to start a green community from scratch with building a micro grid or solar or co-generation. He continued that it was mixed use that would take years to build out. Mr. Craig referred to an eastern town putting all new solar street lights that would reduce its budget substantially. Mr. Zahren noted that Avon did not own the street lights and that they were still owned by the utility company. Mr. Craig asked about schools and parking areas, noting that costs of LEDs and solar were going down while the efficiencies were going up and that it is something to consider. Mr. Glenn added that he'd like to replicate the town of Bedford's success and thinks some type of

corporate buy-in would help. Mr. Kaplan added that Bedford had done well through its outreach to the community on other issues besides energy.

Mr. Gentile would like to see more commercial initiatives to reduce energy use. He continued that the most important purpose of the Commission is educational and informative and noted the great job it has done. Mr. Craig suggested a goal would be to revisit emergency preparedness for essential businesses such as gas stations or convenience stores in the event of an emergency. Mr. Kretz spoke of a central charging station where people could go to recharge their cell phones. Mr. Zahren suggested going to Netflix under documentaries to watch “Antarctic Edge 70° South.” He continued compared to a worldwide temperature increase averaging 2°C, Antarctica has experienced an 11°C increase in the summer temperatures with for example, it’s ice not forming as large as the size of Ohio, as a means to educate people about the seriousness of climate change. Mr. Kretz suggested getting the students involved and perhaps get interns to help with the work. Mr. Craig lamented that climate change is a subject that is little understood by the teachers and maybe we could find some things to help with that.

Mr. Macel noted that Avon is a tough place for commercial entities because many of the tenants do not own the buildings. He continued that PACE was a good concept but bad in practice. Mr. Craig suggested the big chain stores. Dr. Kennedy noted that many of the chains had directors or vice presidents of energy who made decisions on a wider scale and not on individual locations. Mr. Gentile noted that NORCOM was putting solar on their roof on Security Drive. Mr. Macel added that P & Z was more concerned with ground mounted systems vs. roof mounted ones. He referred to a recent article in the Hartford Business Journal that the Green Bank was going to crowdsource for funding and that they were one of the first government entities to do so. Dr. Kennedy told of a Small Business Energy Advantage Program that will finance up to \$100,000 on your energy bill for companies with less than 100 employees and 200kW of heat load. Mr. Kaplan noted that a problem with Connecticut is they have given up on grants. Mr. Zahren agreed saying the state budget in Connecticut is a problem.

## VI. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE COMMISSION

Mr. Kretz reminded that one of the largest producers of carbon are the police cars. He wondered if Tesla or GM was coming out with an electric or natural gas fuel run police car. Mr. Zahren reminded that you can’t replace items before their natural life whether it be police cars or HVAC equipment. Mr. Macel noted that with a budget for the town of \$51 million, that \$48 million was for the school side and this is where you could take the biggest bite. He continued that the recent solar arrays totaling 650kW will supply approximately 12% of the total usage for the town and was good progress. Mr. Craig suggested taking a second look at lighting and air conditioning in the town buildings for potential savings. Mr. Macel questioned whether tax incentives for coming to town would help. Mr. Zahren said that financing energy efficiency has always been difficult. Dr. Kennedy suggested what could benefit the town would be to look for the right entity who could do a performance contract well. The two areas that would see the best reduction of carbon would be in the town’s gas and fuel oil use and you’d need the right person to work with. Mr. Kaplan cautioned that federal grants are running out. He continued that we need to get the residents to get energy audits. Mr. Zahren complained that reaching the residents to respond has been difficult and challenging. He continued that we need to reach the residents to realize that we are destroying the planet and that it has not been easy. Mr. Zahren asked if the members

were willing to put in more hours than just coming to this meeting every other month. Mr. Kaplan suggested getting one or two people from each neighborhood to come to the meetings. Mr. Macel suggested doing it on a larger scale with towns talking to other towns on a regional basis combining that power to effect legislative change and purchasing. Mr. Zahren noted an upcoming September 10<sup>th</sup> workshop group meeting to be held in Torrington. He said people meet to discuss these things and are good when they are in the room but going back to the towns with the ideas has been tough, a long hard struggle. Mr. Zahren asked each member to focus on one thing. Mr. Macel will look at town coalitions. Mr. Zahren, Mr. Kretz and Mr. Craig will try to go to the group workshop meetings such as the upcoming one in Torrington. Mr. Kaplan will talk to the Green Bank to think about distributive solar and suggested a representative come to the next meeting. Dr. Kennedy will work on performance contracting and see if CPACE would allow municipalities to take out a loan similar to one allowed non-profits. Mr. Glenn will work on the grand opening for the solar and the education tie-in for the kids and look into getting students interested in the Commission. Dr. Kennedy is working with a condo association looking at future replacements and asked if it would be appropriate to look at the town's plan.

#### VII. DO ANY BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS MEETING

#### VIII. ADJOURN

**VOTE:** Mr. Gentile motioned, Dr. Kennedy seconded and all agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:30PM. None opposed.

*Respectfully submitted:*  
Chairman Bernard Zahren

*Attest:* Susan Gatcomb, Clerk