

**AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION  
AVON ROOM BLDG. #1 TOWN HALL  
MINUTES  
OCTOBER 21, 2015**

**I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM by Chairman Bernard Zahren in the Avon Room, Building 1 Town Hall. Members present: Chairman Bernard Zahren, Marty Kaplan, Jeffrey Macel, and Richard Kretz. Members absent: Brian Glenn, Joseph Gentile and Mitch Kennedy. Advisory member present: Jonathan Craig. Staff member Town Clerk Ann Dearstyne, Melissa Everett of Clean Water, Kevin Ehrlich and Ali Jackman of Eversource were also present.

**II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MEETING MINUTES – August 19<sup>th</sup>**

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

**VOTE:** Mr. Kaplan motioned, Mr. Kretz seconded and all agreed to accept the August 19<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes with the changes. None opposed.

**III. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE**

Ms. Jackman introduced herself to the members. She said she worked with the Clean Communities team with Eversource. Mr. Zahren wanted the minutes to reflect that he, Mr. Kretz and Mr. Craig attended the September 10<sup>th</sup> session that Eversource sponsored in Torrington which he found helpful.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS**

**V. NEW BUSINESS: a. Approve 2016 meeting schedule, Kevin Ehrlich – presentation of project, c. Melissa Everett – Clean Water**

Mr. Zahren noted that the 2016 meeting schedule would begin with a meeting Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016, and run every other month on the third Wednesday to be held in the Avon Room, Building 1 in Town Hall at 7:00PM. Ms. Dearstyne said the schedule needed to be approved.

**VOTE:** Mr. Kaplan motioned, Mr. Macel seconded and all agreed to accept the 2016 meeting schedule as presented by Ms. Dearstyne. None opposed.

Mr. Zahren asked that the minutes reflect that the Commission recognizes the excellent job that Mr. Ehrlich did with his report and he received an A.

Mr. Ehrlich began his presentation by saying he analyzed the carbon footprint of two towns in Connecticut – Avon and West Hartford. He continued that he chose these towns because they had established groups, were willing to give data and had energy plans. Mr. Ehrlich relayed that he worked at Pratt & Whitney and had worked on his Mechanical Engineering Master's degree part-time. He said there were four main sources of greenhouse gas emissions that he looked at:

stationary combustion, mobile sources, electricity and municipal solid waste. Mr. Ehrlich continued that he only looked at municipal uses, and not commercial or residential, between 2008 and 2014. He noted as expected, West Hartford had more emissions than Avon, given its size and greater population. Greenhouse gas per capita was much more even between the two. Mr. Ehrlich continued that stationary sources such as building heating and cooling and electricity were much more significant than mobile sources and municipal solid waste was almost nothing. Mr. Zahren asked who won. Mr. Ehrlich asked him to define winning. Mr. Ehrlich said Avon decreased emissions more whereby West Hartford was relatively flat. Mr. Ehrlich noted that both towns shared similar approaches to reducing carbon emissions. Mr. Zahren noted that West Hartford replaced their street lighting where Avon doesn't own the lighting. He added that our goal was also to reduce the energy use on a per square foot Btu equivalency for all town facilities, 15% by the end of this year. Mr. Zahren asked Mr. Ehrlich where the low hanging fruit was left. Mr. Ehrlich said you'd probably be looking at the larger type projects at this time such as the heating and cooling of the buildings. Mr. Kretz asked if he saw other towns doing anything with their vehicle fleets. Mr. Ehrlich said he did not look at that.

Mr. Craig commented that the schools were the largest users and could insulation and window and the aging heating/cooling systems be looked at for saving energy. Mr. Kaplan questioned methane emissions. Mr. Zahren noted that most town waste went away to landfills and therefore did not stay in town. Mr. Kaplan noted that methane also came from leaks in natural gas. Mr. Macel noted that Mr. Ehrlich's report was a great piece of information and a great job. Mr. Kaplan agreed.

Ms. Everett began that she is the Energy and Sustainability Program Manager for Clean Water Action. She said the utilities will help you with the clear objective analytical stuff while she helps you with the squishy stuff that allows you to figure out what you want to do such as do a mission statement or keep volunteers happy. She continued that she was at the meeting to help to look at the opportunities and what made sense to commit to. Ms. Everett noted that she is also Chair for the Clean Energy Committee in Enfield and worked on their energy plan last year. She said she'd like to do a qualitative conversation and ask three questions. The first is what is the opportunity space for this commission or what is going to get done if we don't do it. The second question is how would you rank those opportunities – short medium long term, high, low cost, higher leverage. The third question is what does the Commission really want to do. Mr. Zahren noted that West Hartford has dedicated staff to do energy management where this Commission doesn't have anybody. Ms. Everett surmised that the Commission does planning for what they want staff to do. Mr. Zahren added that their role was to advise the town and make recommendations. Mr. Kaplan noted that the BOE has done a number of things but the police and fire department use a lot of energy. Mr. Craig noted that there is more to be done to educate kids and the community on what climate change is. He continued with the need to create individuals who will be proactive and engender a responsibility in our youngsters to take up the baton to continue what we're doing. Mr. Kaplan added that we haven't educated the residential space and how do we do that.

Mr. Zahren noted that Ms. Dearstyne is the town's representative to the Commission and asked what the town would want to do. She said solar was very important but that she couldn't speak for Mr. Robertson or the Town Council. Mr. Zahren suggested that saving money would be a

concern to which she said of course and if a project would cost money that a reduction would have to be seen. Mr. Zahren asked if there was a real commitment in the town to worry about climate change. Ms. Dearstyne said she didn't know and this was never discussed with her. Mr. Macel shared that he works with many towns and they always focus on what makes financial sense. He continued that the towns are very interested in no cost or savings that actually decrease the carbon footprint. He questioned how could we do that in addition to education and felt we'd have to effect policy as a key piece as well. Ms. Everett suggested that shared solar or net metering would fall into that. Mr. Kretz spoke of the building of a micro grid for the future development in the Avon center. He continued with looking at reduction in fleet emissions, the development of natural gas and implementation of electric charging stations in town. He continued that he'd like to see development of bike paths into the commercial areas in town. Mr. Kaplan posed how to track data collection. Mr. Zahren put simply that he'd like to be the cleanest small town in the whole country. He sees the problem of policy and budgets and staffing. Mr. Zahren continued that the Commission was comprised of extremely knowledgeable people and feels we're not using enough of it. Ms. Everett said the Commission has gotten through a lot of stuff and should be proud.

Ms. Everett asked what are the ways that these options can be prioritized. Mr. Craig said the cost or term or overall benefit is in the numbers. Mr. Kaplan suggested prioritizing based on commercial, residential or municipal. Ms. Jackman said from her viewpoint she could look at more savings rather than spending. Ms. Everett asked if there were any timelines around the urgency of the efforts vs. if we were in it for the long haul. Mr. Zahren reminded that to get the town to budget for things that this process would have to be started way in advance. Ms. Everett noted that the primary focus of the Clean Communities Pledge 20% by 2020 savings campaign had to do with municipalities but had incentives packaged in there for residential and commercial outreach goals too. Mr. Kretz questioned getting residents interested when a commercial entity had more profit incentives. Ms. Everett reminded that tonight's goal was to establish that we had options about how we were going to think about this. Mr. Craig reminded that there were two types of business in town: one being the large in the industrial park area and the other being the small business along Rt. 44. He sees the small business owner at meetings and said they'd like to do things but don't necessarily own the building. Mr. Macel offered that big businesses have their own sustainability directors that aren't necessary around but on a national level.

Ms. Everett questioned political risk and the need to pay attention to that. She continued that the ability to inspire others would open more doors to getting things. She summed that the members had talked about the "doables" and might want to play around with ranking them with time frames or cost or policy changes or order of difficulty. Mr. Kretz suggested a crazy idea to get the young families involved would be to light the soccer or football fields with renewable energy. Mr. Kaplan suggested the outside lighting in the schools too. He continued with the idea of several towns benefiting from community solar through the legislature. Ms. Everett noted that the State had matching funds for resiliency planning (CIRCA) which mostly worked with coastal communities but could work in other communities as well.

Ms. Everett continued that things such as prolonged power outages gave those a chance to connect to climate change. She questioned how could we affect behavior as we cannot make them do things but that we could inspire them to. She suggested mapping out a goal and

implementation plan starting with the police department and the fleet stuff and then crack the residential and commercial in such a way to start to get traction and be committed.

Mr. Kaplan noted the availability of grants. Ms. Everett cautioned against rushing to the grants but the first step was to set up priorities that you really buy into. She continued that there must be one thing we could do tomorrow with no additional monies and just do it. Mr. Craig noted that the average square footage of houses in the area had increased so that adding solar panels still wouldn't cover the needs of the household, whereas instead they should have been looking at why they are using all this electricity in the first place. He added that this was another part of the education problem that needed to be started early. Mr. Craig continued that there was such an entitlement to property and a large house that must be supplanted with the thought that we are world consumers who are overusing our resources. Ms. Everett continued that she'd be willing to help and noted that we had good problems.

Mr. Zahren said he appreciated Ms. Everett' insight. She summed that the Commission needed to be less in a bubble and more in a connection with the community.

Mr. Zahren thanked both of the presenters for their very informative and excellent materials. He also wanted to thank Mr. Glenn for arranging for the grand opening of the solar panels at the middle school tomorrow and to thank the BOE and the Town for publicizing it.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE COMMISSION: a. Solar PV/renewable energy systems, b. Financing and other ways to receive support from State/National etc., c. Carbon footprint/software tracking/Clean Communities support

VII. DO ANY BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS MEETING

VIII. ADJOURN

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

*Respectfully submitted:*  
Chairman Bernard Zahren

*Attest:* Susan Gatcomb, Clerk