

**AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION  
AVON ROOM BLDG. #1 TOWN HALL  
MINUTES  
DECEMBER 16, 2015**

**I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM by Chairman Bernard Zahren in the Avon Room, Building 1 Town Hall. Members present: Chairman Bernard Zahren, Marty Kaplan, Jeffrey Macel, Richard Kretz and Mitch Kennedy. Members absent: Brian Glenn and Joseph Gentile. Advisory member absent: Jonathan Craig. Staff members Town Manager Brandon Robertson and Director of Planning & Community Development Hiram Peck were also present.

**II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MEETING MINUTES ó October 21st**

Mr. Kaplan requested the word "light" be removed from the fifth paragraph from the last in section V.

**VOTE:** Mr. Kaplan motioned, Mr. Kretz seconded and all agreed to accept the October 21st meeting minutes with the changes. None opposed.

**III. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE**

None.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS:**

**V. NEW BUSINESS: a. ACEC Charge Revision, b. Avon Village Center Plan ó Hiram Peck, Director of Planning and Community Development, c. Comprehensive Energy Management Plan ó 15% by 2015 Reduction in Energy Usage**

Mr. Zahren noted an agreement was made in Paris recently by almost 200 nations to take steps to reduce carbon emissions. Although non-binding it is something to be happy about with regard to action on climate change. He continued that locally the governor has formed a new council called the Governor's Clean Energy Council ó GCEC that will raise the 2020 goal for reduction in carbon and renewables and start setting goals for 2030 which may be as high as New York and California's goals of 50% reductions. Mr. Zahren noted they'd also look at building codes and ways to save carbon other than through solar or wind.

Mr. Zahren asked if Mr. Robertson would update what has occurred with the geothermal system at the library. Mr. Zahren noted that the geothermal was something that everyone was in favor of because it was renewable energy. Mr. Robertson prefaced that he didn't realize the complexity of the system and would do his best to explain what was occurring. He noted the system has a series of 27 wells spread throughout the property with some located under the patio, with the trouble starting in the western location showing loss of pressure. Some pipe was replaced and easily fixed. Mr. Robertson said more failures started happening in the fall with more losses of well pressure. Currently the patio area is exposed showing the pipe system. He noted there has been a number of contractors looking at the problem ó the original construction manager Enterprise

Builders, the designer of the system CES and the installer of the system Action Air. Our own HVAC contractor, Tradesmen, looked at it and said it was very clear that the failure should not be happening. He continued that nothing is clear yet but that definitively there is an issue ó one currently being identified as the lack of adequate cathodic protection for the copper pipes which is causing premature rapid corrosion. Mr. Robertson continued that the plan was to button up the exposed pipes now and use the winter to regroup for a longer term solution. He added that they have hired a specialist in cathodic protection to run some tests and are waiting on the results. Mr. Kaplan asked if the system was under warranty. Mr. Robertson said the warranty was good for one year on the system. Mr. Macel asked if there was a design flaw with the anode bags to which Mr. Robertson said he couldn't answer. Dr. Kennedy suggested they may have used a thinner gauge of copper than they should have. Mr. Robertson noted that there was no back-up heat and the children's area is where the pumps have gone down. He added too that the system will continue to run to heat the building but not at optimal efficiency. Mr. Zahren said it was a shame because it was a major component in meeting the LEED silver criteria for the State grant. Mr. Robertson agreed that clearly this should not be happening and the contractors have all been very cooperative. Mr. Zahren thanked Mr. Robertson for his report.

Mr. Zahren introduced and welcomed Hiram Peck, the new Director of Planning and Community Development. He continued that discussion had occurred around what would be the new charge for the Commission and that it is now in front of the Town Council for a decision. Mr. Robertson spoke about a very exciting large project that got its first approval from the Planning & Zoning Commission called the Avon Village Center Plan. He continued that it covered approximately 94 acres with 54 of them being new construction, with overall construction adding about 1,000,000 new square feet. Planning began back in 2005 with 2012 producing a conceptual plan which allowed the property owner Ensign Bickford to then go out and market the property. He continued that they have an applicant ó the Carpionato Group out of Rhode Island ó with the first approval occurring in November of this year. Mr. Robertson added that he thought this would be a good time to introduce Mr. Peck to give an overview of the project. He also noted that Mr. Peck is up to speed on the latest on sustainability.

Mr. Peck referred to a handout and series of conceptual plans he provided to the members. He referred to the first plan A, which was first approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission back in 2012, showing a mix of commercial and residential, with approximately 400 ó 500 residential units, the existing brownstones, town buildings and the rest being retail or non-residential development, with the intent to create a new main street. Plan B, brought in by the applicants in July of this year, shows a large commercial building to the north side of Bickford and less residential. Mr. Peck continued that the developer's view was one that saw the commercial ó retail and office ó as what would make it go for them. After a few meetings the plan was modified as C which was developed by our own peer architect. The architect felt there was a great opportunity to move a large portion of the commercial away from Climax Road and a large embankment easement which protects MDC back there. Mr. Peck continued that this would create a village center with building occupancy unknown and that it varied greatly from the design they came in with originally. Plan D shows the largest commercial building size shrinking to 46,000 sf., differing from the original size of up to 120,000 sf., which is a significant number from where we started. He added that going forward the Commission will retain a lot of jurisdiction and discretion as to how each of the sections, 8 or 9 in total, are built and be

supporting a very high architectural level of detail. Mr. Peck noted that the applicant was pleased with the final approval with closing on half the property by the end of the year with the remainder by next June. He added that some of the public amenities will include a park, performance area and a village green. Mr. Peck said that he was very anxious to work with the members with regard to some of the influences that he thinks will be very important such as the new suburbanism, form based development (without a form based code), walkability and sustainability.

Mr. Zahren asked if each street was drivable. Mr. Peck said yes and they have sidewalks. Mr. Peck noted too that they did not want to see the area become a cut through so they have added roundabouts, narrower streets and street parking to slow it down. Mr. Peck noted that his energy policy is influenced by Ed Mazria whose goal of carbon neutrality by 2030 could be reached a lot through architecture and buildings. He also noted an influence Envision - a system for sustainable infrastructure as well. Mr. Peck continued that he'd like to use these influences to make this project an outstanding development, make sure the architecture is great and be a real credit to the town. He wanted also to share that the technology is here now for new zero energy capable construction and feels confident that the added costs would be worth it in the long term. He looks forward to working with the Commission.

Mr. Kaplan asked how much town money was involved. Mr. Peck said so far it was the developer's and added they were very receptive to hiring outside peer consultants of architects and engineers. He continued that some of the roads would be private and some public and wants to make sure the maintenance is carried out correctly.

Mr. Zahren asked Mr. Peck for some sub topics that he might want to put in front of the developers such as solar or a micro grid. Mr. Peck noted too that you'd want to make sure that they are installed correctly as well. He noted telecommunications and energy use and connections with a micro grid will be some things he will discuss with them. Mr. Kaplan added that an important part of this will be street lighting. Mr. Peck added that lighting would want to be safe as well as attractive. Mr. Peck suggested that they would break ground probably no earlier than 18 months, noting getting through with the DOT. Mr. Kretz asked if the developers have done anything like this before. Mr. Peck said they have done big development but nothing like a village. Mr. Kaplan asked about the buses. Mr. Peck assured that there'd be room for the buses to get in and out. He continued that housing could be done above first floor retail places similar to Blue Back Square in West Hartford.

Dr. Kennedy noted a mixed use development that changed last minute to a commercial only and questioned what could be proposed on the town side to insure this wouldn't happen with this project. Mr. Peck answered that the approvals required a phased project, which they presented two, that limits the percentages of residential and commercial that can be built and this requirement is locked in fairly well. He continued that they will not be given permits to go forward unless they adhere to these. Dr. Kennedy reminded of the discussions the members have had around the stretch and performance codes and LEED that would drive development in town to be more energy efficient. Two arguments have been that they are not yet available in CT and we don't want to put Avon at a disadvantage for development in another town not caring what is built. Dr. Kennedy asked if there were more models out there that were more incentivized vs.

regulatory. He was intrigued by a net zero development as well citing it as potentially being noteworthy around the world. Mr. Peck agreed that they could be more incentivized suggesting making the plan denser and assured that he and the P & Z Commission would want this to just be outstanding from a variety of standpoints: walkability, sustainability and zero would be fantastic. Dr. Kennedy noted that parking spaces are an issue being idle 90% of the time and were there any discussions about reducing the number. Mr. Peck said he'd need to delve into the regulations a bit better and make the Commission understand that we don't need all that parking.

Mr. Kaplan asked if they talked about home pricing yet. Mr. Peck said that it was too early. Mr. Zahren reminded of the discussions of the micro grid and hoped by adding one that it could incorporate the town's complex as well in case of power interruption emergencies. Mr. Peck said this developer is going to take care of all of the infrastructure first which will be a great advantage because all of these things will be able to be looked at early on. He continued that we have not seen the final plan yet. Mr. Macel offered that net zero would be tougher to achieve from a business perspective but a micro grid would be better given the police and town here and even to consider fuel cell. Mr. Kretz asked if the developer had a good reputation and would do what they said they would. Mr. Peck said this is always a challenge in his business and a project of this size would always beg the question. Mr. Peck said he had a lot of work ahead of himself and would be working through the winter and keep the Commission informed. Commission members thanked Mr. Peck for his presentation and look forward to working with him as well.

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

Mr. Zahren asked Mr. Robertson for an update on our energy savings collection plan. Mr. Robertson said he'd deferred the job to Bruce Williams in Public Works and explained that we'd take all of the data and give it to a consultant to be put into a format that we can use for presentations (for example to the Town Council). Mr. Robertson continued that he'd like to get a consultant in the next week or two with hopes of getting results by February or March.

Mr. Zahren noted that what came out of the Paris talks and similar has been that not enough monies have been put into research.

Mr. Robertson added that the project is tremendously exciting and you just don't get this kind of opportunity. He noted too that Mr. Peck really does believe in all of this and is very motivated to get the best product we could possibly get. Mr. Robertson continued that the developer is willing to work with us and were the type that buy properties and hold them for a long time. Dr. Kennedy asked if the original buildings would be removed. Mr. Robertson said that most of the brownstones were going to stay in an effort to maintain the character. He added that there were 10 pages of conditions that went along with the approval for the project whereby the Commission is going to retain a lot of discretion.

Mr. Zahren asked about the status of updating the Commission's charge. Mr. Robertson said there wasn't really a rush, that it hasn't been updated since 2013 and suggested waiting a few months. Mr. Zahren reminded that the next meeting would be February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016, continuing with a schedule of the third Wednesday of every other month next year.

VII. DO ANY BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS MEETING

VIII. ADJOURN

**VOTE:** Mr. Kaplan motioned, Mr. Macel seconded and all agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:17PM. None opposed.

*Respectfully submitted:*  
Chairman Bernard Zahren

*Attest:* Susan Gatcomb, Clerk