

AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
February 17, 2021

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Chairman Zahren via GoToMeeting. Members present: Bernie Zahren, William Shea, Don Phelan, Charles Harvell, Christine Winter and Melissa Firestone. Members absent: Richard Kretz. Advisory member absent: Johnathan Craig. Staff member present: Grace Tiezzi, Assistant Town Manager.

Mr. Zahren welcomed Melissa Firestone to the Commission. Ms. Firestone has lived in Avon since September when she and her family moved from Colorado. She has a background in public utilities and energy.

II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MEETING MINUTES – October 21,2020

Mr. Shea made a motion to approve the October 21,2020 minutes as written. Mr. Phelan seconded the motion. The motion was approved. Ms. Winter and Ms. Firestone abstained.

III. COMMUNIATIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE – None.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Avon Village Center Update

Mr. Zahren stated that this Commission has requested that the Town engage in discussions with the developer now, as opposed to later when they file a permit for another phase of their development. This Commission made a direct recommendation that the Town meet with Carpionato. The recommendation is that microgrids are even more essential as climate change, from fires to floods to hurricanes, would likely put the Town's facility as well as the developer's facility out of power for an extended period of time. This backup security is a prime reason to have a microgrid, as well as it can save on power costs if properly designed. In summary, Mr. Zahren stated that this Commission's recommendation was to engage Carpionato in a joint effort to put out an RFP for a developer who would build, own and operate the entire facility at their own cost and give the Town and Carpionato power purchase agreements and energy purchase agreements at a discount.

Mr. Zahren spoke with Mr. Peck who stated that when the developer requests a permit for the next phase of the development, the Town will request a copy of their feasibility study for the microgrid. Mr. Zahren stated that he feels the Town has not done enough nor taken this seriously enough.

Ms. Winter recalls that the developer still owes the Town the feasibility study in terms of making it possible to have the lines underground and the possibility for future passive solar projects, etc. Mr. Zahren stated that this Commission has made many requests and recommendations, although there was never a requirement that the developer do a feasibility study for the first phase; the feasibility study is a precondition for the second phase.

Mr. Harvell stated that he is hopeful that this Commission continues to push for the microgrid. A feasible study is required prior to or as part of the second phase of this development. He questioned what would happen if, after the study is complete, it is determined that a microgrid is not feasible. Mr. Zahren stated that it is a foregone conclusion as to what the developer will probably say. This Commission has no leverage beyond what is currently being done with the Town to request the feasibility study.

Mr. Shea stated that they have dedicated a great deal of time and energy to discussing this subject. He agrees with what Mr. Zahren is saying. He feels that the Town Council and the senior management team also agrees with what he is saying, although he believes that the Commission should move onto things in Town that they can get accomplished. The Commission needs to find a way to accomplish the mission of this group, which is to do the best they can to improve energy and sustainability in the Town of Avon.

Sustainable CT Update

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Town has achieved bronze level certification with Sustainable CT. Most towns take a few tries prior to being successful at achieving this, but Avon succeeded on the first try. The Town will be looking to get their silver certification next. She stated that there are still some untapped items that the Town does as a normal course of business, although it may require some additional work at the staff and commission levels to institute programs and initiatives.

Mr. Shea stated that the Town received the bronze certification due to the support and enthusiasm of this board, the Town Council and the management staff. The Town is now well positioned to go for silver. This will take everyone working together to keep the momentum rolling. This certification is great for the Town but there is a lot more to do and accomplish.

Ms. Winter questioned how the Town will approach which items to accomplish in pursuing the silver certification. Ms. Tiezzi stated that it will start at a staff level meeting in March. She stated that the program continues to evolve; the program in 2020 is not the same program as it stands in 2021. They will be looking at it as a group effort to see what they do in their normal course of business that either did not make it into the first round or certain actions that the Town did not receive points for last time. It will be a matter of what the gaps are, how to fill them, and how to get to where they want to go. Town staff along with this Commission and the Town Council can work together to decide what the priorities are and how to proceed. She will hopefully have an update at the April meeting.

Electric Vehicle Charging Station Project

Ms. Tiezzi stated that she and Glenn Grube, Library Director, put together a proposal for the 2022 operating budget for the purchase and installation of an EV charging station for the library parking lot. The idea was to use this as a pilot project and perhaps expand it to other locations in Town. Unfortunately, this will be a tight budget year; there was a zero percent tax increase last year. The budget that the Town Council is considering is very bare bones; there are very few new initiatives that they are considering. The electric vehicle proposal did not make it in to the Town Manager's budget; however, there is an alternative solution. She stated that several years ago, the Town of Simsbury put out an RFP for a vendor to come in to design, install, build, maintain and operate an electric vehicle

charging station in their town hall parking lot. She spoke with Simsbury's Public Works Director and although it did not go through at that time, he feels it was because the market was not quite there for charging stations five years ago. She enclosed a copy of the RFP that Simsbury conducted in the Commission member's packets for their review. If this Commission is interested in pursuing this project, they could consider putting out an RFP to see if it is cost effective. If the Commission members agree, she can draft an RFP to discuss at the April meeting.

Mr. Shea questioned, other than in Simsbury, if there were other municipal models to look at. He feels that there needs to be more than one or two stations. He questioned how the Town would go about qualifying to get more stations. Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Town could include phases in the project where there could be the initial phase; other phases could include other stations and other locations, etc. With an RFP the Town does not need to be too specific for future phases. Another option is to see if there is interest in other communities who the Town of Avon could partner with.

Ms. Winter asked what the dollar amount was for the charging station proposal at the library. Ms. Tiezzi stated that the proposal was for \$7,300. Unfortunately, in an operating budget, this is a large amount.

Ms. Firestone stated that based on her experience in Colorado, a vendor came in and put in a super charging station. She questioned if the Town of Avon has reached out to Tesla. They will partner with an entity because they want to encourage ownership of the vehicles they produce. Mr. Zahren stated that the charging stations that Tesla would install are only for Tesla vehicles.

Mr. Zahren stated that he would be in support of Ms. Tiezzi putting out an RFP.

Mr. Shea stated that he agrees with Ms. Firestone's approach. He asked Ms. Tiezzi to get information from the Canton Planning and Zoning Department regarding the plans for the La Trattoria location. He stated that the developer will be putting charging stations in and he would like to see the Town of Avon try to partner with this same company as a starting point.

Ms. Winter suggested contacting Tesla and sending out an RFP simultaneously. If Tesla would put a charging station in Town, if nothing else it would put this on the radar of residents in Town. She stated that there are resident in Town that do own Teslas. Any project that helps move toward charging vehicles, no matter what the brand, is a positive initiative.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Town has received their first hybrid police car; the officers are still getting used to it but seem to like it. The second car will be coming soon. Ms. Winter questioned where these cars are charged. Ms. Tiezzi stated that they are traditional hybrids; they do not need to be charged.

Mr. Harvell stated that he read that Royal Dutch Shell plans to be carbon free as a corporation by the year 2040. Relative to this conversation, they currently operate 60,000 electric vehicle charging locations. Within the next 5 years, they expect to have 500,000 locations. He suggested, at the next meeting, that the Commission receive what they will be requesting in writing along with the time frames, etc. He suspects that people in the community would be excited about this initiative.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that she would draft specifications for an RFP for the April meeting for the Commission member's review.

V. NEW BUSINESS

RBS Solar Panels Project Proposal – Conceptual Discussion

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the capital budget for next year includes an appropriation for the third phase of a new roof at Roaring Brook School, which should be done in July. She stated that it might be a good candidate for solar pv as well. If the Commission is interested, she could come up with a timeline and process to share with them as well as the Town Council.

Mr. Zahren stated that this is a simple process; the Town will receive a lot of bidders. He would recommend the Town look at a more expanded version that would include battery storage along with solar panels; they only produce when the sun is out. This would be backup storage during a power outage. This is becoming very mainstream for solar. Unfortunately, incentives from the State have been declining; incentives are not as good as they used to be.

There was a consensus among the Commission members to move forward with the RFP.

Bicycle Friendly Community Application

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Town submitted an application to the League of American Bicyclists for a designation as a “Bicycle Friendly Community”. Like Sustainable CT, there are different levels. Staff has worked with members of the BikeWalk Avon, CT group and assembled the application. They are expecting a response by May. If approved, the Town of Avon would be the seventh community in the immediate region of bike friendly communities. She stated that BikeWalk Avon, CT is planning events in May, including a bike to work and school day and a group ride with members of the Town Council.

Mr. Phelan volunteered his help if needed.

Avon High School Roof Top Unit Project

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Board of Education had a project to replace all of the roof top HVAC units at the high school. This is a \$1 million project to replace these units. The Town is planning to fund one phase in the capital budget. Myles, the Board of Education’s Operation Director, came to the Town with a proposal for an energy incentive through Eversource for half of the project cost. This \$796,000 project will cost approximately \$400,000 since 50% will be reimbursed by Eversource. The Town will move forward with this project as soon as school gets out.

Ms. Winter stated that there is still money available through this program for energy and insulation projects for homeowners as well. The rebates are tremendous. She participated and approximately 90% of the costs of her projects were reimbursed. She feels that this is a good idea for the Commission to get behind and advertise. Homeowners need to have an audit done through CCM. Once this is done, they can hire a contractor to put in the insulation, heat pump, hot water heater, etc. She stated that it would be nice to advertise this information.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that they did promote this program through the Town’s website in the past. She also contacted Eversource to see if they could do a virtual program hosted by the Senior Center or the Library; neither of those departments thought it would be of interest. She would be willing to see if there is more interest now. She would also put this in the April newsletter.

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Mr. Shea stated that the things discussed tonight, the Roaring Brook School solar panels; the bike friendly designation; and the replacement of the rooftop HVAC units puts Avon closer to achieving a silver designation through Sustainable CT.

Regarding the geothermal at the Library needing to be reworked, Mr. Harvell stated that the Town is beginning the process of repairs to this system. He would like to include this issue on an upcoming agenda because, as a Commission, they should be familiar with this.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that a settlement has been reached. The Town has proceeded down a path to determine an alternative system. The Town has engaged Fuss and O'Neill to help them focus on potential solutions and what the costs would be. They have run an RFP for a mechanical engineer and selected RZ Design Associates to do the design for a new system; they recommended a geothermal system that was made out of more traditional products. The Town has engaged a contractor, All State Construction, and issued a notice to proceed in January. Tree clearing has already started at the library. A well driller will be out soon to drill the well field. The existing system will be left in place while the new system is constructed. Some of the mechanisms inside of the building will remain as well.

VI. ADJOURN

Mr. Harvell made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. Ms. Winter seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted:
Chairman Bernard Zahren

Attest: Alison Sturgeon, Clerk