

AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
August 18, 2021

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Chairman Zahren via GoToMeeting. Members present: Bernie Zahren, William Shea, Don Phelan, Charles Harvell and Christine Winter. Members absent: Melissa Firestone and Richard Kretz. Advisory member absent: Johnathan Craig. Staff member present: Grace Tiezzi, Assistant Town Manager.

II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MEETING MINUTES – April 21, 2021

Mr. Harvell made a motion to approve the April 21, 2021 minutes as written. Mr. Phelan seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

III. COMMUNICATION FROM AUDIENCE – There was none.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Electric Vehicle Charging Station RFP

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the RFP was asking for proposers to tell the Town what the market would support regarding electric vehicle charging stations. As the Town Attorney was helping revise the Town's standard contract, he reached out to a connection in the field of EV charging stations regarding the viability of the Town's proposed approach. There were only two companies that use this model that the Town was pursuing. The Town Attorney's contact suggested that the Town first reach out to those two vendors. Ms. Tiezzi stated that they could not get in touch with one company; the other was not interested in what the Town was proposing.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Commission has several options moving forward. They can go back to their original concept of the Town purchasing, installing and operating a station, or they can wait and see what will happen with the infrastructure package in Congress as it makes its way through the two chambers. There are now 6 charging stations that have been installed at Whole Foods as well. She suggested that the Commission may want to wait and see and allow the market to dictate where charging stations are needed.

Mr. Zahren stated that the company the Town contacted may not have been interested because the RFP was for only a few charging stations. The project may have been too small to generate any interest. He reminded the Commission members that they were already turned down once in the budget for the \$7,000 cost of a charging station at the library. Ms. Winter stated that she feels this would have been a small financial commitment on the part of the Town. Having charging stations at the library could have also been in a visible location and served as an educational device. Many towns have started out providing charging stations without a fee attached to them. She feels that Avon needs to be willing to put a little bit of money into this initiative. Mr. Phelan stated that he is not a fan of the Town paying for the charging stations. Although this is a great way to encourage electric car use, he does not see the equity in giving electric car owners a free ride with their power as opposed to people with hybrids or gasoline cars. Mr. Harvell stated that he feels the Commission members should wait and look at the

infrastructure programs that are coming down from the Federal Government. They may know, in possibly 6 months, if the second package includes charging stations/electric vehicles. In the meantime, this Commission can do more work as how this might affect Avon. He feels that Avon might need to compete with other towns to secure these funds and if they prepare in advance, it will help them be more informed and ready.

Mr. Zahren stated that he understands that this will be part of President Biden's second and much bigger Bill and more aligned with their goals in terms of reducing climate change by having more electric vehicles. He also agrees that people should pay for their charge at any public access location.

Mr. Zahren stated that he is in favor of tabling this item. Ms. Winters stated that she would like to support Mr. Harvell's idea of researching the Town's needs so they are ready if and when funds become available.

Mr. Harvell suggesting having a subcommittee meet to get a better and deeper understanding of what is available under the infrastructure plan; the Whole Foods charging stations, etc. as well as evaluating the Commission's next steps. Mr. Zahren stated that they have formed study groups in the past, although the group cannot consist of more than three members. Mr. Harvell volunteered to Chair this group. He asked that someone from the Town staff be a liaison; Ms. Tiezzi stated that she would attend these groups. Mr. Phelan volunteered to be a part of the study group as well.

Avon Village Center Update

Mr. Zahren stated that Mr. Peck sent an update which was self-explanatory. He also stated that he has zero confidence that when the time comes, there will be a viable proposal from Carpionato relative to approval for a second phase.

Mr. Phelan stated that he rode his bike through the Town Center and noticed that there was not a lot of action with respect to other tenants except for the rehab facility. Mr. Tiezzi stated that capturing other tenants has been slow due. Mr. Peck and the developer seem confident that once Whole Foods opens on September 1st, the other tenants will start to filter in. The pandemic has made things slow as well as the challenge that businesses are having finding staff.

Mr. Phelan questioned what the bio-facility was in the back of Whole Foods. Ms. Tiezzi stated that it is a food to energy system called Grind2Energy. All of the store's food waste goes into a big compost and gets picked up and hauled to the anaerobic digester facility in Southington.

Sustainable CT Update

Mr. Zahren stated the Town will not be moving toward silver certification in August 2021 because of timing and what the Town could achieve by the deadline.

Mr. Shea applauded Ms. Tiezzi for all of her hard work and for helping this group be where they are today. He stated that the silver certification has its own set of issues; the bronze was a huge success. Avon can get the silver certification, although it will take a great deal of effort. The work is the reward and the success; and the achievements are the benefit to the whole Town. He stated that Sustainable CT does need to get more organized, in his opinion.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the bronze certification the Town received was a tremendous achievement. The silver application, for a number of reasons, is more complex. She stated that one major item is the equity tool kits that they need to complete. Their approach to this program, all along, has been to take advantage of what they are already doing as a community. One of these big efforts is the development of an affordable housing plan. They did receive a grant from the State of Connecticut Department of Housing. The Planning and Zoning Commission is working with a consultant to get this done; although it is not quite ready. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she is also expecting that there may be programmatic changes with Sustainable CT that might impact the Town's application. The Town is taking a pause while waiting for the affordable housing plan to be completed. She is also hopeful that in January, they can look at the changes put forth by Sustainable CT and figure out how the Town should move forward. The key point is that the Town is continuing to make progress, albeit not as fast as they would like. Mr. Shea added that in addition to using what the community is already doing, they are breaking new ground in an effort to get smarter, efficient and sustainable. There is a lot of progress, creativity and outreach as well.

Mr. Phelan stated that he has spent a great deal of his career in affordable housing and if there is anything he can do to help the Town, he would be happy to. Ms. Tiezzi thanked Mr. Phelan and stated that this task falls on the Planning and Zoning Commission. They have engaged a consultant. For a number of reasons, it is not moving quickly; it is on the Planning and Zoning Commission's agenda as a staff update at almost every meeting.

Ms. Winters stated that Mr. Shea spoke of some aspirational goals and innovated thinking being pursued. She asked for more details. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she will email the Sustainable CT Action Handout to the Commission members.

Connecticut Green Bank Solar Marketplace Assistance Program (MAP)

Ms. Tiezzi stated that there is nothing this Commission needs to do at the moment regarding the Green Bank Solar Marketplace Assistance Program. She stated that the Green Bank was successful in obtaining incentive awards for the four medium sized projects, which are Thompson Brook School, Pine Grove School, Roaring Brook School and Avon High School. They are still waiting for the results of the smaller projects, which include the middle school and the Police Department, although the Green Bank seems to be confident they will obtain those incentives as well. She stated that the next steps would be sending out the RFP, hopefully at the end of August. They will share the RFP on the Town's website and will then wait to see the type of responses they receive for an installer. Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Green Bank has kept the Town informed through every step of this process.

Ms. Zahren stated that Mr. Shea had a good question at the last meeting regarding if the vendor would be bonded. Ms. Tiezzi stated that bonding is a standard practice of the Town whenever they engage in construction projects. They require a security bond and certain insurance requirements as well as the contractor having to name the Town as an additional insured on their general liability, automobile and workers comp policies. Ms. Tiezzi has reached out to the Green Bank regarding these matters.

Mr. Harvell questioned what the Letter of Intent that was signed commits the Town to. Ms. Tiezzi stated that it only commits to participate through the RFP process. It was a non-binding Letter of Intent. He questioned what their role as a Commission would be moving toward the next steps. Mr. Shea stated that the Commission members should act as a checks and balance and as a resource for questions and due diligence. He believes it will be the responsibility of the Town Council, Board of Education and the

Board of Finance to make the performance and payment decisions and policies as well as the completion of the project.

Mr. Harvell stated that at the last meeting he made a request to the Green Bank representatives to provide, in dollars and not percentages, what the economic advantages are to essentially making available the Town's rooftops for 20 years at no charge. He would like to know at the end of a certain timeframe, what the Town has received for the use of its assets. Secondly, he questioned how much of a green energy effect this proposal will end up being. He questioned if the Town would end up reducing their dependence on the utility, however that utility produces their power; how much will be reduced and how much will be replaced by clean energy, as in this case, solar. Mr. Zahren stated although the Town is giving them the use of their rooftops, in return they will give the Town a power purchase agreement that will save the Town countless dollars in their electric charges that they would otherwise be paying to Eversource. This is called net metering. He stated that the Town should feel grateful that they would be willing to use their rooftops to give them subsidized electricity.

Mr. Harvell stated that in the Hartford Courant last month, there was an article about microgrids and how two microgrid systems in California are functioning and that they offer to the State of California, where they have fire issues, another approach for distribution and generation of energy. The way he understood the microgrid activity was that solar was built in conjunction with the microgrid; solar generating power that goes into a microgrid that is an alternative to the power distribution of the utility company. He stated that if the Town would deliver over their rooftops to the Green Bank, he would hope that they would feel that they were generating a certain percentage of no-so-clean to clean energy. And secondly, that it would be enough dollars that it would be fine for the Town to forgo opportunities that might come in the future.

Mr. Zahren stated that in essence, this project is a microgrid. A microgrid can be any source of independent production of power that is isolated from the grid and can be islanded off the grid. That is what this project is except the islanding is available to the schools; part of the school facility could be run even if the grid was out. He stated that this project is not a detriment to the Town. The Town is giving them the use of their rooftops and the only way to get the financing and the low rates is to commit to a 20-year power purchase agreement. He believes that no future opportunities will be missed.

Regarding other potential uses the Town could make from the power that will come from these solar panels, Ms. Winters questioned if there was a way to ensure that it would be permissible for the Town to install batteries and save some of the power generated. She questioned if there was a way to ensure that they can draw from the energy of these panels for other purposes without being penalized. Mr. Zahren stated that Eversource is obligated to net meter, which means that if the Town does not use the power that has been generated at that time, the Town would get credit for it against the full price of power that the Town would purchase from Eversource. This is an extremely positive model for the Town. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she understands that Ms. Winter is looking for a clause in a contract that would make this permissible. She stated that once they get a power purchase agreement, the Town as well as the Town Attorney will be thoroughly reviewing it. She has made a note of this suggestion and will talk to the Town Attorney to see if he feels this is necessary. Mr. Shea stated that the attorneys that will be looking at these documents specialize in this type of law and for these types of projects.

Electricity Procurement

The Town and the Board of Education contract jointly for electricity supply. Their existing contract expires in December 2021. Working with a consultant via the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, a reverse auction was held on July 8th. Based on the results of the auction, the consultant advised staff to hold off on locking in pricing and instead wait until this fall. The consultant continues to closely monitor the market on the Town's behalf and will try again in September or October.

V. NEW BUSINESS

State of Ct Sustainability Goals/Potential Legislation

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Town Manager's office quite frequently weighs in on legislation that impacts municipalities. If this Commission has Bills that they are passionate about following, they can discuss a plan to advocate or not advocate for it depending on the topic.

Mr. Zahren stated that there is a statewide group that is very active, which is composed mostly of people on similar commissions to the Avon Clean Energy Commission in 30-40 different Towns. He would like this Commission to participate in these initiatives when proposals come up in the Legislature as well as through multiple state cooperation. This is where this Commission can make a big difference.

VI. ADJOURN

Mr. Harvell made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 p.m. Ms. Winter seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted:
Chairman Bernard Zahren

Attest: Alison Sturgeon, Clerk