

AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
October 19, 2022

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Chairperson Firestone in the Avon Room at the Avon Town Hall. Members present: Carrie Firestone, Christine Winter, Bernie Zahren, Daniel Carvalho, Michael Guerrero and Michael Dawson. Member absent: Kim Stevenson. Staff member present: Grace Tiezzi, Assistant Town Manager.

II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MINUTES – September 21, 2022

Mr. Zahren made a motion to approve the September 21, 2022 minutes as written. Mr. Carvalho seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

III. COMMUNICATION FROM AUDIENCE - None

IV. COMMUNICATION FROM COMMISSION

Mr. Zahren stated that he has the only residential windmill in the State of Connecticut on his property. This is his fifth month in a row that he has had a negative energy bill, although it will catch up with him during the winter months since he has a geothermal system which pulls the heat from underground by a pump system. It is his goal to have a 12-month period where he would break even and not use any power from the Eversource generation.

V. OLD BUSINESS - Ongoing Project Updates:

Connecticut Green Bank Solar MAP

Ms. Tiezzi stated that they had a kick off meeting with the Town, Board of Education, the Green Bank and its construction partner, Verogy. Currently, they are trying to get Verogy on site at the two schools next week. They will then start the design and put together the construction drawings. The idea is to stage for construction in June. Construction would run from June through September to be ready for the new school year. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she is happy that they were also able to honor the original PPA price.

EV Charging Stations

Ms. Tiezzi stated that she and Mr. Grube have submitted an application for DEEP's charging station grant program and also applied for incentives from Eversource. They have the quote from the company that has been selected. They continue to wait and see; the Town only has approximately \$14,000 in the capital budget for this. Other funding sources are needed to move forward.

Town-wide Energy Plan Request for Proposals

Ms. Tiezzi stated that she, Ms. Firestone and Ms. Stevenson drafted a proposal for a town-wide energy plan, which in part, was an update to the original 2012 plan, but also extending to more than just municipal operations. They will be meeting with Mark and Bernie from PACE to get

their feedback and how, potentially, PACE can take on some of this work. The concern was how much this project would cost. They, along with Mark and Bernie, will discuss how PACE can help, what can be done in-house and what will need to be done by a third party.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that Mr. Williams is working to update the Town's roof asset inventory so they can make sure to have an understanding of the warranties and when they end, as well as the ages of the roofs. This is a key component of the whole energy plan; knowing where and when they could add solar onto municipal buildings.

Mr. Dawson stated that the Town needs to look at how much they are currently spending on energy and think about how much they can save with solar. Ms. Tiezzi stated that they need to try and figure out how to get to the same end product without spending a huge amount of money. An important aspect of this is to get the data; a third party consultant is not needed for this portion that they can do themselves.

Mr. Carvalho suggested instead of looking at roofs for solar to research other structures like carports. This will help alleviate the maintenance factor of having them on the roof. He stated that if they want to present a money savings solution to the Town, giving them another avenue that will not only provide a savings on energy, it will also provide a roof for vehicles.

Mr. Dawson stated that he has spoken with John Elsesser, Coventry Town Manager, who is interested in pursuing a microgrid to serve that Town. To spark some other ideas, Mr. Dawson stated that there is an MDC water main that runs down Route 44 in Avon, which is 55 degrees; they could possibly harvest this for a geothermal project. Also, there could possibly be solar on the landfill. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she will look into the closing of the landfill.

Mr. Dawson stated that he also spoke with an Energy Management Advisory Committee member from Greenwich. They are pursuing a virtual net metering process; they expect to save 10% of their cost. They are using the company TRITEC Americas. This developer looks at the sites, designs and builds the system, as well as uses the CT Green Bank. This developer, who does all of the work, is the type of company this Commission should be looking for.

In terms of how master planning helps, Ms. Tiezzi stated that it needs to be approached in a systematic way to evaluate the data; to evaluate the existing conditions; to figure out what the community desires; and then set up the recommendations and how to implement them in a way that is cost effective and meaningful. The outcome of this planning is a roadmap of 10-15 years of work that can be systematically chipped away at.

Ms. Firestone stated that microgrids are important and, she feels, the Town of Avon will regret not having one. She stated that it is important for this Commission to discuss the topic of mitigation in the near future as well.

Pumpkin Composting Initiative

Ms. Firestone stated that the flyer for the composting pumpkin initiative came out amazing. She thanked Ms. Tiezzi for all of her hard work.

Anagha stated that the Climate Action Club at the high school is making posters for this event to hopefully get more students involved and to educate people about pumpkins in terms of food waste and reduction as well as repurposing pumpkins. Once the posters are done, they will get them approved by Dr. Lockhart and put them up around the school and within social media.

Ms. Winter questioned if this information could be sent out to other schools as well. She had also suggested having a coloring page for the elementary school aged kids. Anagha stated that the administration could possibly send this information to other schools since students would not have the access to do that. They could possibly pass out coloring pages to the elementary teachers to hand out to students. The Club will also work on researching specifically composting coloring pages. Ms. Firestone stated that if the coloring pages do not get handed out through the schools, they might want to have them available at the event. Ms. Winter stated another possible place to distribute the coloring pages would be in the foyer at the library. Ms. Tiezzi stated that the flyer could also possibly be put on the Sub Edge Farm's Instagram page.

Ms. Firestone stated that she has put the pumpkin event flyer out virtually; it has been shared several times already. Ms. Tiezzi stated that it will also go out on the Town's website as well as in the Town newsletter, which goes to every household.

Ms. Firestone stated that a time should be set regarding when they will be having cider and donuts as well as a time for the kids to jump and play in the hay. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she will clear the time with Roger and will also amend the flyer.

Ms. Winter stated that someone from the press should be at the event. Ms. Firestone stated that she will contact The Patch. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she will inform the Valley Press as well. Mr. Zahren suggested having the flyers posted at grocery stores where pumpkins are sold.

Ms. Firestone stated that if anyone is available to volunteer the day of the event to greet and talk to people, that would be helpful.

Green Up Avon Sustainability Initiative

Ms. Winter stated that she attended a CT Energy Network meeting. The group's focus was on steps for next year; they have been cooperating with other organizations, especially in terms of legislative initiatives, which have been successful. She stated that they want to, as a whole, focus on increasing the use of heat pumps, energy solutions, solar solutions and getting more EVs installed. Ms. Firestone stated that based on this list, Avon seems to be on the right track. Ms. Winter stated that the organization is also focusing on anti-methane pipeline expansion.

100 Homes in 100 Days

Ms. Winter stated, in terms of the 100 homes in 100 days initiative, another CT town took their town from 20% to 30%. They did a strong program coordination with Eversource and the energy audit contractors. She stated that when talking with this town, they told her that 100 homes in 100 days is probably not a realistic timeframe. What they did feel was helpful was making contracts with certain providers and getting a code coordinating with Eversource to reference the code to be put in to contact with these particular companies quickly. The biggest selling point was getting these audit companies to donate a certain amount of money to a local charity in Town. This was a big motivation for the community.

Ms. Firestone questioned how they identified and secured competent contractors. Ms. Winter suggested that the group from that town come to the November meeting, possibly a Zoom meeting, to discuss this issue. Ms. Firestone stated that having a more direct process will only help this initiative. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she was interested to hear how this group did their

selection process. She would be interested to see the documentation that was put out to the public.

Ms. Winter stated that she was stunned to learn that if someone called for a home energy audit, Eversource would put them into a queue. If Eversource did not get a response from the initial caller within 2 days, they would be sent to the back of the line in the queue. She felt this was not a good system; they need to let people know to respond to the Eversource callback. Ms. Firestone stated streamlining this process and having competent people are needed.

Ms. Winter stated everyone is concerned with the economy. Ms. Firestone stated her concern with Eversource not letting people know how much they can save and how much their neighbors have already saved by doing this energy audit. Ms. Winter stated that the other big problem is the lack of companies to do the work as well as the lack of trained employees that these companies have.

Draft Work Plan

Ms. Firestone asked that Commission members think about what initiatives/projects they would like to work on moving forward. She asked Mr. Guerrero and Mr. Carvalho to find more creative ways to market this Commission's upcoming initiatives. Mr. Guerrero stated that a boost to post and promote something on Facebook is a way to get the word out. This is an inexpensive way to advertise. Mr. Carvalho stated that they can also reach out to politicians can help get the word out as well.

There was a short discussion regarding the Town of Avon not currently having a Facebook page because of the management piece as well as the liability aspect. This may change soon. Mr. Guerrero suggested working together with Sub Edge Farm to use their Facebook page to boost the pumpkin event. Mr. Carvalho stated that he will also be putting this initiative out on the Ring app. Ms. Winter suggested asking some faith based organizations to help spread the word as well.

Ms. Firestone stated that once they figure out a good process for promoting their initiatives, it can be streamlined.

Ms. Firestone asked that if anyone has any ideas for projects, to please share them with the Commission.

Enford Street Grounds Pollinator Garden

Ms. Firestone stated that they will need plants for the pollinator garden. She questioned if the Commission could have a fundraiser for this. Ms. Tiezzi stated that they cannot as a Commission hold a fundraiser. Ms. Firestone questioned if the Commission could partner with the Simsbury Pollinator Pathway to possibly hold a fundraiser at Mr. Zahren's house. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she will look into this possibility. She stated that Sustainable CT has a community match fund; there may also be grants available from non-profits as well. The Town may be able to contribute a small amount of funding as well.

There was a short discussion regarding having a meeting at the garden site. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she will invite Bruce Williams, Alex Trujillo and Ruth Checko. Although there will be community involvement, Town staff should also participate to make sure everyone is involved in the process. Ms. Firestone state that there should be a whole team involved to make this

community garden. They can then draft their visions to bring back to the Town. Also, it could be something that can be built upon year after year. It does not need to all be done the first year.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Commission might want to look at getting the UCONN Extension Program, the Master Gardener Program involved as an educational piece to this project. Ms. Firestone stated that once they are further along, they might want to reach out to the college Anagha is interested in going to in Massachusetts, Sterling College, as well as the master gardener that presented at their festival.

Ms. Firestone stated that she would like to have a forum on this topic at some point during the winter months. She will work on putting this together.

Solar Research – Member Update

Regarding the discussion at the last meeting regarding school buses, Mr. Dawson stated that he spoke with a bus driver who told him that some of the smaller buses in Town might be gas and the large buses are diesel. A discussion should be had prior to contract negotiations and renewals. Ms. Firestone stated that this Commission could possibly invite the Board of Education staff to a meeting to ask them to be mindful as to what other communities might be doing. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she will research to find out when the bus contracts are up for renewal.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Approve 2023 Meeting Schedule

Mr. Dawson made a motion to approve the 2023 meeting schedule as proposed. Ms. Winter seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

VII. ADJOURN

Ms. Winter made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:02 p.m. Mr. Zahren seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted:
Chairperson Carrie Firestone

Attest: Alison Sturgeon, Clerk