

AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
January 18, 2023

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m. by Chairperson Firestone in the Avon Room of the Avon Town Hall. Members present: Carrie Firestone, Christine Winter, Kim Stevenson, Michael Dawson and Michael Guerrera (arrived at 7:15 p.m.). Members absent: Bernie Zahren and Daniel Carvalho. Staff member present: Grace Tiezzi, Assistant Town Manager.

II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MINUTES – November 16, 2022

Ms. Firestone made a motion to approve the November 16, 2022 minutes as written. Mr. Dawson seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

III. COMMUNICATION FROM AUDIENCE

Angela Sum, 31 Ridgewood Road, a 27-year resident of Avon, stated that she is concerned with the environment. She always tries to reuse things, especially when it comes to textiles and apparel. There is a company that services CT where they take something that cannot be brought to a store like Goodwill and they will collect these textiles. She has talked to Bruce Williams about this being a win/win for the Town. There is no cost to the Town, in fact, after a certain amount of tonnage picked up from Avon, the Town would receive money from this company. The pick-up location in Avon should be a public location with easy access; bins would be located at the drop-off. Ms. Sum stated that the company will need a liaison, which she would be happy to volunteer for, although she would need a co-person to help her since she will be moving out of Avon within the next few years.

Ms. Sum stated that if the Town Council approves this, she would like to put out communications through the Town's newsletter and Facebook page. Ms. Firestone stated that the Girl Scouts have been interested in reducing textile and fashion waste; this may be a way to get the word out as well.

Ms. Firestone stated that the next step should be having a representative from the company make a presentation to the Commission. Ms. Sum stated that the company is not local, so that may not be able to happen. Ms. Tiezzi stated that a virtual meeting would be fine. Some research will need to be done regarding a good location for the drop-off box. Ms. Tiezzi stated that this program would be exciting to have in Avon.

Ms. Sum stated that she would love the drop-off location to be within walking distance to the high school since they have environmental clubs there. Anagha stated this would be a great idea; their club has been talking about this topic as well.

Ms. Winter stated that this sounds like a great Gold Award project for Girl Scouts. Also, the Salvation Army tends to have their drop-off boxes located in retail parking lots. She would assume that retailers would want them in their lots to help bring customers in.

Ms. Sum stated that she will reach out to the company and will email Ms. Tiezzi.

IV. COMMUNICATION FROM COMMISSION - None

V. OLD BUSINESS

Green Up Avon Sustainability Initiative – Home Energy Solutions Program

Ms. Tiezzi stated that she recently purchased a home. She signed up for the Home Energy Audit the day after Thanksgiving. She received a call from the contractor on January 3rd and has an energy audit scheduled for March 20th. She stated that there is a long lead time. She received an email as soon as she signed up on the Eversource website, although the remainder of the process was slow. Ms. Winter stated that this timeline is disappointing.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that she spoke with Mark Massaro; he connected her with Amanda Stevens, who is a supervisor of the Energy Efficiency Group at Eversource. She spoke with her about Eversource's contractor selection process. She is comfortable that their contractors meet a set of minimum qualifications. She was also told that Avon should set a radius and call those contractors to see if they could prioritize Avon for this initiative as well as if they would be willing to donate to a local charity. She did ask Amanda about funding a mailer for this initiative, although unfortunately this opportunity sunsetted with the Clean Energy Communities Program.

Ms. Stevenson suggested calling the owner of EcoSmart to have a conversation with her about the Town's concerns and to see if she would be willing to commit a certain amount of bandwidth to this initiative. Ms. Firestone stated that she will make some phone calls to see if someone would be interested in doing the same model as North Haven.

There was a short discussion regarding utility rates and the different companies that people are switching over to. Ms. Stevenson suggested having an educational session on this topic at the library. Ms. Winter stated that a number of Towns, including PACE, are publicizing this topic on their website. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she was going to take the graphic that has been on the Town's website since December and put it on their Facebook page next week.

Ms. Stevenson stated that she met with the folks from Bedford 2030. They are a national model of how to do community organizing and set an agenda and implementation plan around sustainability. They have an energy advisor working with them. She attended a session with this advisor, who is extremely knowledgeable. Bedford 2030 has a grant where this advisor is available to serve as a consultant to any property owner in Bedford, NY. He is interested in working with Avon. As a starting point, she suggested having the advisor as well as the Executive Director of Bedford 2030 speak in terms of how their initiative evolved and what they are doing and what Avon can do to help their own initiative. There was a consensus among the Commission members to ask the advisor to come virtually to their meeting in February or March.

Pollinator Garden Project

The Town staff met with Ms. Firestone, Ms. Stevenson and representatives from the Garden Club of Avon in late December to review the Enford Street site. Based on the size of the site and the lack of a fresh water source, it was determined that the site was not ideal for our purposes. The Director of Public Works suggested a site on the Fisher Meadows property. Staff plans to review the site in detail before meeting on site with the project team and determining next steps.

Ongoing Project Updates

CT Green Bank Solar Marketplace Assistance Program

Ms. Tiezzi stated that Verogy has draft electrical diagrams that they are using to design the system interconnection options. The next step is to begin preparing documents for submission to permitting agencies (Planning and Zoning) and to the utility as part of an interconnection application.

EV Charging Stations

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Town continues to wait to hear from the DEEP on the status of their grant applications. A decision is not expected until the end of January at the earliest. DEEP has advised her that they received over 80 applications for funding; more than they were expecting.

Town-wide Energy Plan

Ms. Tiezzi stated that, at PACE's suggestion, she has begun a draft of an energy plan document using their baseline analysis. Much of her attention has been given to other projects over the last month or so. She is hoping to return to the draft over the coming months.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Discuss Tentative Events/Projects Calendar for 2023

Ms. Firestone stated that Mr. Zahren is available to conduct a financial informational session in terms of how to look at your financial portfolio and how to invest environmentally. She suggested having this session at the library during the week of Earth Day.

Regarding the Doug Tallamy (author of *Nature's Best Hope*) talk, which was tentatively scheduled for March, Ms. Firestone stated that this has been cancelled because Doug Tallamy himself will be coming to Avon in October. The March 1st library date will instead be a screening of "Uninvited", a documentary about an overview of invasive species. Susan Masino, a tree expert, will moderate a conversation after the film. Ms. Firestone stated that during the spring, the topic will be invasives and she would like to have several events where the Garden Club could walk people through different properties to help them identify invasives. She suggested also having an educational piece on pesticides.

Ms. Firestone stated that she would still like to have a Community Campout as an educational event. This will bring the community together to unplug and to be outside. She stated her vision is to have people running around Fisher Meadows and to bring in someone to talk about star gazing. She also suggested possibly having Mr. Guerrero's band play an acoustic set at this event. Ms. Firestone will be in partnership with the Recreation Department in terms of details.

In the fall, Ms. Firestone stated that Doug Tallamy is coming. The library is available for any other sessions this Commission wants to do. He is coming in October and this is the best time for planting as well.

Ms. Firestone stated that the CT League of Conservation Voters is meeting on January 24th. She questioned if any of the Commission members were able to attend. Ms. Winter stated that she may be available to attend.

Ms. Firestone stated that the CT Land Conservation Council, Land Trust Alliance and Trust Republic Land is having a housing and conservation event. It will be about wetland conservation and affordable housing; both are needed in communities and not to pit them against each other. She will try to attend this event.

Ms. Firestone asked Mr. Guerrera to think about how he can be creative regarding marketing their future initiatives and getting the word out.

Ms. Firestone asked Mr. Dawson about possibly approaching the Chamber of Commerce to open up the conversation to move forward to talk to commercial building owners to see if they are interested in solar. Ms. Stevenson stated that as of January 2023, the Inflation Reduction Act, there are federal and state incentives. She also suggested having awards for the "first mover award", "biggest system award", etc. This is a way to also promote that particular business in Town. Ms. Tiezzi stated that Eversource also has a lot of programs for commercial properties; she will reach out to Mike Massaro regarding what Eversource has to offer in terms of commercial energy programs.

VII. ADJOURN

Ms. Winter made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 p.m. Ms. Stevenson seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted:
Chairperson Carrie Firestone

Attest: Alison Sturgeon, Clerk