

**AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
JULY 19, 2023

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:08pm by Chairperson Carrie Firestone in the Avon Room at the Avon Town Offices. Members Present: Carrie Firestone, Christine Winter, Kim Stevenson, Michael Dawson. Student Member Present: Anagha Bhumireddy. Members Absent: Michael Guerrero, Daniel Carvalho, Bernie Zahren. Staff Member Present: Grace Tiezzi, Assistant Town Manager.

**I. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEEDING MINUTES**

On a motion from Vice-Chairperson Christine Winter and a second from Mr. Dawson, the minutes of the April 19, 2023 meeting were unanimously approved.

On a motion from Mr. Dawson and a second from Ms. Winter, the minutes of the May 18, 2023 special meeting were unanimously approved.

**II. COMMUNICATION FROM AUDIENCE**

Margret Bratton-Board of Finance member was in attendance to ask general questions with some emphasis on the EV charging stations.

**III. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION**

Ms. Firestone was approached by a friend who has a net zero house and other cool things, and he provided a connection with a gentleman based in Brooklyn who has a new business model about connecting homeowners with heat pumps. Ms. Firestone was invited to be a pilot customer and based off information she provided; they came up with an algorithm-based plan to help her figure out how to get a heat pump. Ms. Stevenson asked the name of the company. Ms. Firestone stated the company name is Housitive and she would forward the information to the Commission. Ms. Firestone stated if the Commission is interested in putting the word out about heat pumps, their focus is on oil customers and how they can get heat pumps to oil users.

Ms. Winter stated that more information would be needed to present the information. Ms. Stevenson stated she would be interested in trying this as well for her own home. Ms. Firestone addressed the need to schedule a date for the first hike for invasives. Ms. Tiezzi stated the land trust partners with other departments as well, so it would be good to get a good group together. Ms. Firestone addressed the

horticulture events for invasives, specifically for Barberry and other intense invasives like Virginia Creeper and Mugwort. Ms. Firestone suggested the name “Pull Therapy” as event to hike for and pull invasives and to work on getting a few dates on the books. Ms. Firestone stated that she learned from one of these hikes in the past that if you pull Barberry 3 years in a row in the same place, it will never return. Ms. Firestone stated that with more land stewardship and sharing plants and flowers and building better communities, the hope was that would anchor more outreach with other projects the Commission has in the future.

Ms. Winter asked if there are more flyers to hand out to homeowners for the Green Up! project. Ms. Stevenson asked for a list of homes that may have pulled permits for the best way to find residents in the town who have not already made energy conservation improvements. Ms. Tiezzi stated she could gather information from the Assessors list for the ability to sort by neighborhood and homes built before 2000. Ms. Stevenson stated it would be helpful to just ask people what they are most interested in learning about to bring them into the conversation. Ms. Tiezzi stated that all this information could also be listed on the Town of Avon website. Ms. Winter stated that older citizens may not have the access with regards to technology, so the face-to-face approach may be best way to get the information out there. Ms. Firestone stated that she had a meeting with the VFW that made it clear that many older citizens are not as able to contribute because of technology. Ms. Stevenson stated that perhaps the Senior Center could host an event. Ms. Tiezzi stated the Senior Center loves lunch. Ms. Firestone asked if it was a possibility to pay for a lunch. Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Senior Center has a program called “Mondays Meals and Minds.” Ms. Winter stated that in addition to the information, it would also be good to note that these programs are also based on income, which may reach more individuals concerned about cost. Ms. Tiezzi asked if Mike Murray may be interested in coming to an event like this and present. Ms. Firestone stated he probably would. Ms. Tiezzi stated she would talk to Jennifer Bennett for a possible Fall/September event.

#### **IV. OLD BUSINESS**

##### **a. Town-wide Energy Plan**

Ms. Firestone and the Commission praised Ms. Tiezzi’s first draft of the Town-wide Energy Plan. Ms. Tiezzi stated she had to give credit to the Town of West Hartford because she really liked their plan and borrowed heavily from it to create the draft. Ms. Stevenson asked if Ms. Tiezzi put together the plan with PACE’s help. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she took the data set from PACE and her interpretation for the draft, then all the information for the Town of Avon is from the Plan of Conservation and Development and different documents, then Bernie from PACE provided accurate numbers. Ms. Firestone stated that the Commission should review the plan. Ms. Tiezzi stated the red text is noting the municipal energy use

including data from Public Works, on the fleet, use of electricity, gas, oil, and that has been sent over to PACE. Ms. Tiezzi stated she is still working on getting the Board of Education's data. Ms. Tiezzi stated then all of that will also go to PACE and then they will break down what percentage of energy use belongs to the Town of Avon and what percentage is municipal operations.

Ms. Winter stated she remembered cooperation between towns to find data within each town, however collaboration seemed difficult because some towns were more efficient than others. Ms. Winter stated for example Bloomfield was willing to work with the Town of Avon. Ms. Tiezzi stated the Town of Avon has an energy information system called Asset Essentials to pull from, but the Board of Education doesn't have a system, the information comes from individual invoices. Ms. Winter stated that perhaps federal funds could be used. Ms. Stevenson asked if the topic could be brought to the Board of Education to integrate a better workflow energy monitoring system. Ms. Tiezzi suggested talking to Deb Chute to start. Ms. Firestone suggested it may be significantly more impactful to get on the Board of Education agenda.

Ms. Stevenson stated having a student assist to present the information to the Board of Education as well to join forces. Ms. Stevenson stated that the goals are not really focused yet on really getting at hardcore performance so for example participating in energy efficient programs, it is not as easy to breakdown without hard metrics. Ms. Stevenson stated that the DRAFT at least allows for a more focused path. Ms. Stevenson stated that asking residents to comment on something or to understand and comment, first start with a very engaging proposal in order to grab attention. Mr. Dawson stated that \$82 million spent on energy needs to be broken down per individual or per household to be more eye-catching. Ms. Firestone suggested a comparative study of cost between clean energy households versus those that are not. Ms. Tiezzi stated for solar information we are at the mercy of the utility. Mr. Dawson questioned the number of property owners that have solar panels. Mr. Dawson stated more accurate data will promote more willingness to join these programs. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she can bring the plan back in August to update.

Ms. Stevenson stated that the Commission should speak to Brandon about the work Ms. Tiezzi has done so far and how data informs the strategy and then the implementation and fundraising. Ms. Firestone stated that Ms. Tiezzi is only one person, and it is not her whole job, so how does the Commission get a grant for a full-time person to assist. Ms. Firestone stated that at the rate of climate crisis right now as we see this Summer in real-time, we don't have time to screw around, so how does the Commission need to advocate for that. Ms. Tiezzi stated that a grant would not pay for that, but the best way to make a request would be to put it in writing to the Town Manager, Brandon Robertson as a Commission. Ms. Stevenson stated that maybe that could evolve to hire someone for a part-time/full-time

salaried person and show that the salary will benefit the Avon resident and make a strong case for the Town as a cost-saving benefit for the Town of Avon. Ms. Firestone stated that the first step seems to be to reach out to the Town of West Hartford for a job description and more information. Ms. Winter stated she would be happy to reach out to West Hartford for more information. Ms. Firestone stated a need for an actionable plan for next month with regard to the plan.

Ms. Tiezzi stated the Commission digest the plan draft, send comments, and then her hope would be to have the municipal database together for August and then just focus on the plan then. Ms. Stevenson suggested having strong vision about how the Commission can look to other communities that are doing it well. Ms. Tiezzi stated that the town is a member of CRCOG, which is the Capital Region Council of Governments and that's 39 towns in the capital region and with an organization called CIRCA out of UCONN to update the region's Capital Hazard Mitigation Plan, which is required through FEMA so that the Town of Avon can be eligible for certain grant opportunities mitigation projects. Ms. Tiezzi stated she had a meeting with the group from CIRCA, Bruce Appell, Fire Chief and Fire Marshall, and the Emergency Management Director. Ms. Tiezzi stated the focus was all the traditional kinds of natural hazards like earthquakes, tornadoes, nor'easters, and specific focus on flood, flood prevention as well as extreme heat issues. Ms. Stevenson stated that heat is the most significant reason for climate deaths at the moment. Ms. Tiezzi stated that going through this planning process along with the 39 towns in the capital region and what the product will be is general recommendations for the region, but also town specific recommendations.

Ms. Tiezzi stated the previous plan was done five years ago and the intention is for the new plan to be developed with specific goals in mind as well as things that are more tailored to what's happening now. Ms. Winter asked if microgrids were part of the discussion. Ms. Tiezzi stated that one of the recommendations from the last go around was to study a microgrid for the Town of Avon offices. Ms. Stevenson stated a microgrid isn't necessarily a resiliency measure, the resiliency measure is a community heating or cooling center or core community assets getting power. Ms. Tiezzi stated in regard a microgrid being used in place of a traditional gas or propane powered generator, that's how it would be included in the plan, but the focus is not so much the clean energy piece rather things like when the Farmington river floods, how are we ensuring that the properties that are closest to it are as protected as they possibly can be and what are the mitigation measures or where are the vulnerable populations in times of extreme heat and what resources do we have available for them and how do we ease the burden when it comes to those extremes. Ms. Winter stated that is why the microgrid should be a key component of something like that. Ms. Tiezzi stated it was in the plan last time and so one the things we discussed at that meeting was continuing to keep that in there and to continue to look for applications that might be appropriate for a microgrid.

Ms. Winter stated that the Commission can continue to work on trying to get people's houses better insulated and get them to switch to heat pumps so that they can have their home cooler in the summer, but there is still a need for cooling centers. Ms. Firestone stated that the last very last thing is to consider adding to this a land plan because part of community resiliency is going to be switching to a way of tending to the land where we're using native plants or we're using different kinds of trees so that they are helping mitigate drought and flooding and restoring the land to its natural state to help with all these things, and how this can be done in a very cheap and reasonable way because we as a community can do this together, in addition reducing emissions, with regard to lawn machinery and what is being done to the land in our community is having a huge impact. Ms. Firestone stated that while these plans are becoming be more drought resistant, more flood resistant, helping to anchor the soil is part of the plan. Ms. Tiezzi stated that this is one of the areas where the work that the Commission is doing overlaps with the purview of the Planning & Zoning Commission and that every town in the state is required to have a plan of conservation and development that is updated every 10 years. Ms. Tiezzi stated that the last one was updated in 2016, so the Town of Avon will be due for a new one in 2026. Ms. Tiezzi encouraged the Commission to review that Plan of Conservation and Development, POCD, and to can get involved so that the Commission can start to work with the Planning Department and the Planning Commission to make sure that that the ACEC feedback and thoughts are heard and voiced.

Ms. Firestone stated that it would be a good time now to start building public support for native plants and native soils, because there will then be pressure on the process. Ms. Stevenson reiterated that need for a vision, and to address cluster zoning, and open space or forests and whatever else to start dealing with all these environmental issues. Ms. Firestone stated for example taking old shopping malls and making beautiful housing where you're living in nature, but you're still part of an integrated community. Ms. Tiezzi stated that it definitely takes work between commissions and so as representatives of the Clean Energy Commission, you can go to a Planning & Zoning meeting, or send an email to the chair of the Commission to work as part of a network to show that these are all cross functional problems. Action to review the Energy Plan and update and focus on this plan again at August meeting. Commission agreed.

#### **b. Sustainable Investing Program**

The commission discussed the May 18 event and while there were not many people in attendance, it was fantastic. Ms. Winter stated frustration that the event was highly publicized. Ms. Firestone stated that the commission needs to forge ahead and continue to promote these events to see what sticks. Ms. Firestone recommended the book Optimist Telescope about incentivizing environmental health. Mr. Dawson recommended recording the next committee event for people unable to attend in person to have

the opportunity to access the information at their own leisure. Ms. Stevenson stated she would have watched the video had it been available because she was unable to make the event. Ms. Tiezzi stated that there was a possibility of having future events recorded.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that Michael Guerera's article was picked up by Valley Press. Ms. Firestone stated she thought the event information should be brought on the road because the information was so valuable. Ms. Winter suggested bringing the information to clubs at the high school as young people are going to be thinking about what to do with their money. Ms. Firestone stated that a new law just passed that everyone must take a personal finance class before graduating. Ms. Bhumireddy stated that personal finance is easy, so teachers might be willing to fit in a sustainable investing lesson. Ms. Firestone suggested Tunxis Community College is another idea about approaching and looking into.

**c. Green Up! Avon Sustainability**

Ms. Winter asked if a list of older homes in Avon could be provided and how long the program with Aiello would be provided. Ms. Tiezzi stated she would provide a list and according to Chris Murray they have plenty of budget left and another company that also has plenty of fund in their budget left that is willing to work with the Town of Avon, so the program can continue to be advertised.

**d. Ongoing Project Updates**

Mr. Dawson asked about the resident that wanted to recycle textile scraps. Ms. Tiezzi stated that there is a company called Simple Recycling that drops off and picks up pink bags for textile scraps. The Commission continued discussion on different ways or different programs that could be good for recycling textile scraps. Ms. Tiezzi stated she would continue to research.

**i. CT Green Bank Solar Marketplace Assistance Program**

**ii. EV Charging Stations**

Audience member Ms. Bratton asked what the costs to Town of Avon taxpayers would be and how will the benefits from the EV charging stations. Ms. Tiezzi stated that there is a proposal for charging stations at the Avon Library, there is a grant from the State of Connecticut for \$11,000, and there are also rebates from the utility that will be tapped into once the charging station is installed. Work is being done to work with the vendor to see what the Town of Avon will kick in, but there is funding in place. Ms. Tiezzi stated there are solar panels at the schools and at the Public Works department so every 5 years there is what is called a "true-up" where basically the solar company squares up with the town. If the panels produce less than expected, the Town gets a payment. A couple years ago the Town of Avon got approximately \$14,000 which went into a capital account to be tapped into.

Ms. Batton asked why not let a free-enterprise or private sector pay for the charging station. Ms. Tiezzi stated that it was tried, but they do not that because there is no market for that.

Ms. Batton asked if we know how many electric car owners there are in the Town of Avon. Ms. Tiezzi stated there are 326 electric car owners currently, about 3.2% of registered vehicles and growing.

Ms. Batton asked if those people have their own charging stations at their houses or if a lot of those people have voiced a need for charging stations in the Town of Avon. Ms. Tiezzi stated she would think they do and asked if Ms. Firestone may know more. Ms. Firestone stated that she thinks most people do, but it would be convenient for people to have a charging station in Avon. Ms. Tiezzi stated the library is a central and high traffic area and the library is interested in having a charging station. Ms. Tiezzi said there will also be a payment system implemented because the town is not giving away electricity for free. Ms. Batton stated that her next question was regarding the payment system. Ms. Batton asked if the costs would cover insurance. Ms. Tiezzi stated it would probably be added to the standard insurance policy just like any other. Ms. Batton asked if a certain amount of electricity needed to be sold to make the charging station profitable. Ms. Tiezzi replied no, but the rate will be set to cover the backend. Mr. Dawson stated the project would basically be cost neutral. Ms. Tiezzi concurred. Ms. Batton asked if this project would be expanding to subsidizing private charging stations. Ms. Tiezzi stated the Town of Avon would not fund a private charging station. Ms. Tiezzi stated her thought would be after the library, to look at the trail heads or other high traffic areas where people spend time. Ms. Firestone agreed with the idea of trail heads to attract tourism and people spending time in the Town of Avon. Ms. Batton asked who would be contracted to supply the electricity. Ms. Tiezzi stated the charging station would hook into the library's meter and all wiring will come from the library underground and Eversource will distribute the power and the Town of Avon has a supply contract with a company called Constellation New Energy that will supply the electricity.

## **V. NEW BUSINESS-NONE**

### **a. Fall 2023 Programming Schedule**

Ms. Firestone stated that a closing meeting thought to the Commission regarding the idea of shutting down Country Club Road to Lovely Street from 2-4pm, Monday-Friday during the school year for increased safety in the school zone.

**V. ADJOURN**

Ms. Winter motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:14pm. Mr. Dawson seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted:  
Chairperson Carrie Firestone

Attest: Nicole Chambers, ACEC Clerk