

**AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION  
AVON ROOM BLDG. #1 TOWN HALL  
MINUTES  
December 19, 2018**

**I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chairman Bernard Zahren in the Avon Room, Building 1, Town Hall. Members present: Chairman Bernard Zahren, Don Phelan, William Shea, Christine Winter, Richard Kretz and Jeffrey Macel. Member absent: Venkata Anupoju. Advisory member absent: Jonathan Craig. Staff member present: Grace Tiezzi, Assistant to the Town Manager.

Mr. Zahren acknowledged David Pena, Town Council member, in the audience.

**II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MEETING MINUTES – October 17, 2018**

Mr. Shea made a motion to approve the October 17, 2018 minutes as written. Mr. Phelan seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Mr. Zahren stated that the new 2019 Town of Avon calendars have been published; the Avon Clean Energy Commission's report is included in the calendar. He stated that Marty Kaplan, a retired engineer, had served on this Commission for 10 years. He thanked Ms. Tiezzi for putting Mr. Kaplan in the acknowledgements of the calendar. He would like permission from the Commission members to write a letter on their behalf to Mr. Kaplan thanking him for his service on this Commission.

**III. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE – None.**

**IV. OLD BUSINESS**

Avon Village Center Update

Mr. Zahren stated that he, Mr. Shea and Mr. Phelan all met with Hiram Peck, Director of Planning and Zoning as well as Ms. Tiezzi regarding the Village Center development. He stated that they were given a complete update. Sketches of the proposed town center were distributed to the Commission members. The Town has given the developer a permit to begin the grading and infrastructure portion of the project, although nothing has gone forward as of yet. Mr. Zahren stated that the biggest building in the Town Center is the developer's intended anchor tenant for the complex. Mr. Shea stated that he believes this Commission can work to try to support the Planning and Zoning Commission in their efforts to approve the town center from an energy efficient standpoint. Mr. Phelan stated that all sides seem to be open to suggestions and this Commission was encouraged to make recommendations.

Mr. Zahren stated that the two short streets in the plan would be the heart of the retail area. There are also pedestrian-only walkways; parking would be behind the big box area. The Town has always wanted a town center where people could mingle and shop as well as something that would be walkable. That is the intent of this development. He stated that retail is currently under attack because of online purchases, so finding tenants for this environment may be difficult and will take time. He stated that there are three phases of this development. They are discussing only the first phase at this time.

A resident questioned if the new village center would hurt small businesses already in town, especially those in Old Avon Village. She asked if this Commission was currently trying to support the local businesses in any way. Mr. Zahren stated that this is a private developer and the Town cannot dictate who they have as tenants.

Mr. Zahren stated that other attractive features of the town village development will be the major open space and the outdoor amphitheater. All in all, he feels this is something Avon has wanted for a long time, which is a town green right in the center of town.

Mr. Zahren stated that the Commission has been charged with making overall recommendations to Mr. Peck and the Planning and Zoning Commission. There is a range of criteria for sustainable building and architecture that could be adopted. The best known is Leadership in Environmental and Design (LEAD). There are four levels of LEAD, depending on how good the construction is. He stated that this Commission could request that the developer reach a certain level in terms of building standards. Another is Energy Star criteria, which originally applied to appliances, although they now have criteria for buildings. This is a national standard, but is less stringent than LEAD. The third criteria is called Ashrae, which has a set of criteria regarding how to properly build, in terms of building standards.

Kim Stevenson, Avon resident and Green Bank employee, stated that LEAD standards are focused on environmental sustainability including an energy component. Energy Star is strictly energy. She stated that another standard for the Commission to consider is Passive House. These standards reduce energy usage that its renewable or passive heating of the building that provides the energy source. When done properly, building operations and maintenance is significantly reduced. Mr. Macel stated that this savings could also be a selling point to the developer.

Ms. Baran stated that she would support requesting that the developer use the highest of these standards. She feels that Avon could be a leader in making these choices.

Mr. Zahren stated that he would like to see benchmarking done on certain criteria. He would like the developer to be responsible to monitor actual usage. This Commission could draft these criteria for measuring metrics proposed by various organizations, trying to get the developer to adopt the highest one. Ms. Tiezzi stated that Mr. Peck is looking for a letter from this Commission with their recommendations; she will draft the letter for review prior to the February meeting.

Ms. Winter questioned what the developer's underlying goals and vision are for this development. Mr. Zahren stated that this commercial developer is ultimately looking to make a profit. He stated that the current concept has evolved and may continue to evolve depending on recommendations from this Commission as well as others. Ms. Stevenson suggested having a green charrette, which is a formal process facilitated by a professional. The purpose is to bring multiple stakeholders together, which is often better done at the early stages of a project. Ms. Tiezzi stated that this might be something that could be included as a recommendation, although this is a private development, so it would be up to the developer to coordinate and finance a charrette.

Carrie Firestone of 36 Cambridge Crossing feels that the Commission's suggestions are great. She would like to see the community come together regarding climate change as well. She feels that Avon can show leadership in this area in the State of Connecticut as well as the country. She questioned what would be the harm in requesting the highest and best standards from the developer, which to her sounds like Passive House. Mr. Phelan stated that he believes timing would be the issue at this point; they only have a two month period. He believes that this town center development has been very well thought out and is somewhat sensitive to environmental issues.

Ms. Winter agrees with Ms. Firestone. She also stated that there was a lot of contention around Blue Back Square when it was first presented in that town. West Hartford has now garnered positive accolades for this development; it added to what was already there. She would like to see the same thing happen in the Town of Avon.

Mr. Macel questioned where the development stands in terms of the permitting process. Also, what impact this Commission could have in this process. Ms. Tiezzi stated that the site plan approval was granted in July. The developer will be coming back to the Town in February with detailed infrastructure plans. This will be another set of approvals to go through. During this approval process, there will be opportunity for Mr. Peck to make recommendations as well as put conditions on the developer. Mr. Macel would also like to see community comment somewhere in this process.

Mr. Zahren stated that the bonding is still in place to support municipal infrastructure for microgrids. He stated that they did not get the bid to the state submitted because the load profile for the town's building on this campus was too low and there was not any use for the thermal. His recommendation would be not only the Passive House criteria, but that they recommend the developer engage in a solicitation for conceptual microgrid applications.

Ms. Tiezzi requested that any other suggestions or recommendations be emailed to her.

### Goal Setting

Mr. Zahren stated that this Commission is called the Avon Clean Energy Commission. He stated that the way the Commission defines some of the things they want to do tends to be better insulation and not green energy. It is sustainable but not green energy. There was a short discussion regarding changing the name of this Commission.

The Commission members considered their long term goals. Ms. Winter stated that she would like to see a goal in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Although natural gas is not produced in Avon, she feels that they have a responsibility since they are end users. Mr. Zahren stated that if they adopt a pro-reduction in carbon footprint, by definition, using less natural gas reduces the carbon footprint.

Mr. Phelan questioned if their long term goals should focus on the direct benefits to the town or to society in general. Ms. Winter feels it should focus on society in general because towns are what comprise society in general. She stated that this starts in our houses and our towns. Mr. Phelan stated that although he understands what Ms. Winter is saying, he questioned if this is what their Charge from the Town Council was. Mr. Zahren stated that this Commission needs to decide if they want to change their Charge.

Mr. Zahren stated that he would support the following on their list of long term goals: recommend that the Town Council amend the Commission's Charge to incorporate goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions; expand joint initiatives with neighboring communities through projects, education sessions, etc.; update Town's Comprehensive Energy Management Plan; and advise the Department of Planning & Community Development on energy efficiency/sustainability aspects of the Avon Village Center.

Regarding the last item on their list, to promote Avon as a "bicycle-friendly community" Mr. Phelan stated that he would like to work with other communities to sponsor a bike ride event that would raise money and have as its cause sustainability and saving the environment. This could be a way of bringing other communities together.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that she will edit the Commission's long term goal and in turn rework some of their short term action steps.

Ms. Winter stated that she would like to see having an electric car show on the short term goals. She stated that transportation is their biggest goal in terms of fossil fuel waste. Mr. Williams suggested that this Commission request that the Town and the Board of Education obtain bids on electric vehicles. Mr. Kretz suggested this for maintenance equipment as well. He would also like to see 20-30 or more preferred parking for electric vehicles at Fisher Meadows. He feels that this would be another incentive for people to purchase an electric vehicle.

### Legislative Updates

Mr. Macel stated that at the PURA meeting last week they discussed implementing Senate Bill 9. He commented at that meeting as a private business owner and as a member of this Commission, that solar on roofs would not be possible under this Bill, which is real time net metering. He stated that the programs that were put in place approximately six years ago will be sun-setting very soon. It is now time for a new program. A controversial Bill passed that is an imperfect solution which requires the PURA to

put forth an order to implement the new Bill along with pricing. Because of this, there is expected to be a lull between the programs.

V. NEW BUSINESS – None.

VI. DO ANY BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS MEETING – None.

VII. ADJOURN

Mr. Phelan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m. Mr. Kretz seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted:  
Chairman Bernard Zahren

Attest: Alison Sturgeon, Clerk