

AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION
AVON ROOM BLDG. #1 TOWN HALL
MINUTES
October 16, 2019

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Zahren in the Avon Room, Building 1, Town Hall. Members present: Bernie Zahren, Richard Kretz, Don Phelan, William Shea, Jeffrey Macel and Christine Winter. Members absent: Venkata Anupoju. Advisory member present: Johnathan Craig. Staff member present: Grace Tiezzi, Assistant to the Town Manager.

II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MEETING MINUTES – June 19th

Mr. Shea made a motion to approve the June 19, 2019 minutes as written. Mr. Kretz seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

III. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE – None.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

AHS Students Anti-Idling Campaign

Carrie Firestone stated that she is presenting on behalf of the community group, Forward Connecticut. Their work is done through a project based model. They are looking for projects that address climate change on a local level. Transportation is a huge factor and contributor to emissions in Connecticut as well as globally. Idling is very concerning to a lot of people, although many people do not know what it is and how significant it is in contributing to emissions. Forward Connecticut has come up with a project, in which they are calling “One Community, One Project”. The first project is an anti-idling initiative; essentially the goal is public awareness. This project can have a significant impact by just spreading public awareness. It is already against the law to idle for more than 3 minutes in Connecticut. If the community comes together to spread the word, they can make a difference. They will be moving forward on this project until January, 2020 at which time Forward Connecticut will move on to other projects, including: the fashion industry and climate change; the use of lawns contributing to climate change and native species; and food waste.

Ms. Firestone stated that they have a logo and signs for their idling campaign, which can be shared on social media. They are hoping to get some sandwich signs to place at different businesses in Town as well. They also have three different designs of car magnets.

Ms. Firestone is asking the Commission today for each person to help spread the word. Ideally, the whole community will get involved. She also asked that the Commission be a community partner with this initiative.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that there is information about this initiative in the upcoming Town newsletter. More information about this or other initiatives could be written in the January and April editions as well.

Recommendation of Student Non-Voting ACEC Members to Town Council for Consideration

Ms. Firestone stated that she is recommending Neil Srinath, Avon High School senior to become a student non-voting Avon Clean Energy Commission member. She suggested that Neil recommend another student that would like to be a non-voting member of this Commission as well. These names need to be put on the Town Council's agenda at the beginning of next month; the names need to be given to Ms. Tiezzi by November 1st.

Neil Srinath stated that some Avon High School students will be teaching elementary and junior high school students regarding how to engage in climate activism. He questioned what the Commission members would suggest in terms of what type of information and talking points they could share. Mr. Macel suggested looking at the National Renewable Energy Lab, which has different grade appropriate materials. Mr. Zahren stated that there are a lot of nonprofit organizations that have educational materials. He also suggested looking up the different ways to calculate a personal carbon footprint.

Avon Village Center Update/Microgrid Discussion – guests Chris Bleuher and Michael Sahm

Mr. Peck stated that Phase IA of the Village Center Plan is underway. There will be 300,000 sf of building within the 13 buildings that are planned. The tenant for the largest building will be Whole Foods market; energy conservation is an important part of this project. Two more retail buildings will be constructed on the other side of Climax Road. Behind Whole Foods, there will be two retail buildings as well. He stated that a total of five buildings will be up within one year, which is an aggressive schedule. Mr. Peck stated that staying on top of the developer to make sure they stay on task is part of his daily routine. Also as part of this project, a waterfall will be created; the bike trail will go through the village center; a landscaping plan will be put in place while trying to minimize the parking area; and pervious paving is part of this project as well as low impact development.

Mr. Peck discussed that there will be two temporary roads, which are important from a safety standpoint. These temporary roads will allow emergency services to continue to get through. Once the newly constructed road system is open, the temporary roads will be put back to a natural form.

Mr. Peck stated that he is aware of the importance by this Commission as to whether the developer will be interested in establishing a microgrid as part of this development. He did give the developer the letter from this Commission and has discussed this with them. He believes a microgrid could be an incentive to some of the tenants as well.

Mr. Zahren stated that he attended the International Solar Energy Industry Association Annual Convention in Salt Lake City with Mr. Macel. He spent a day long symposium on microgrids that included the following statistics in terms of why the grid is unreliable: most places rely on a generator as back up to the grid; 38% of all generators do not start up when the power goes out; economic loss; weather can take out big sections of the grid; cyberattacks; physical terrorist attacks; grid overload; and electromagnetic pulses.

Mr. Zahren introduced Michael Sahm, Independent Consultant and Chris Bleuher of Schneider Electric.

Mr. Sahm stated that he is here as a local resident; he cares about the Town of Avon. This is an amazing opportunity, during the master planning of the site development for the Village Center that this community may not have again. The new Village Center could support a lot of loads with the 1.2 million square feet

within the entire development; the development being on one site is also an advantage. District heating and cooling would be a huge advantage, not only to the economies of the central plant but to the economies for the developer as well, although it remains to be seen if the development will get to the scale that is needed. As the site is being tore up and the roads are being put in, the distribution loads could be put in at the same time. It is less expensive during this phase of development. Having enough mixed use in the development is important as well in order to get a higher percentage of fuel efficiency in terms of the mix of loads and load profiles. Regarding new technology for batteries, Mr. Sahm stated that the issue is cost. Being able to size the batteries to be a good match with what you want to do with demand response is important.

Mr. Bleuher stated that he has reviewed the plans for the new Village Center. A centralized plant would provide all or a portion of the energy needed that would normally come from a utility. The set of distributed energy resources (DER), which would be a mix of solar, fossil fuel and potentially battery storage, will provide and operate in parallel with the grid. The economics, in terms of the preferred model, is energy as a service. Most projects are owned by a third party; the third party owner would own the DER and sell the energy.

Mr. Bleuher stated that someone with a microgrid expertise needs to be talking to the developer, contractors and engineers to educate them on microgrid specific products that would enable the campus to be designed to operate better. Likewise, they should be talking to the mechanical person designing the energy system. Large and continuous loads are attractive to a third party owner. Mr. Zahren stated that Carpionato will retain ownership of the buildings and land and lease them to tenants. Mr. Sahm stated that if they can structure this as an entire microgrid with a single point of common connection to the utility, it would cost less to construct the project as a whole as well as benefiting other parts of the Town by going into virtual net metering allocation. Energy could be put on the grid so other municipal facilities could take that as a credit against energy purchases.

Mr. Peck stated that he meets with the Village Center development team on a weekly basis. He will discuss the microgrid recommendations with them again. It would also be helpful to have the contact information of those experts that would be willing to talk with the development team so he can pass that on to them as well.

Ms. Winters made a motion to strongly recommend that the Commission reinforce the letter that they wrote to Mr. Peck and to emphasize to Carpionato that a microgrid is appropriate for consideration for the new town center because the timing to do this is critical; once the infrastructure is in place, the costs to do this will increase; and there are deadlines for pending Legislation and Federal subsidies and credits that give incentives for these types of developments. Mr. Phelan seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Presentation of Sustainable CT Program

Alyssa Norwood, Program Manager, for the Sustainable CT program, stated that Sustainable CT is a voluntary certification program to recognize thriving and resilient Connecticut municipalities. Currently, 89 of Connecticut's 169 towns are participating in this program. This is an independently funded, grassroots municipal effort; Sustainable CT provides a wide ranging menu of best practices. Communities choose actions, implement them and earn points toward certification. The only requirement of the program is that towns do at least one action item from each category, which earns them points. She stated that 200 points or more achieves bronze level certification and 400 points or more achieves silver certification.

Ms. Norwood stated that not only is environmental and economical sustainability a part of this program, they also take equity very seriously. The program has been very successful in changing the conversation in terms of how towns approach sustainability to make sure it is an inclusive process. Any town that is registered with Sustainable CT can utilize the community match fund, which is an opportunity for anyone in the town that has a great idea for sustainability to crowd fund for the project. The project would get posted online; the community match fund and Sustainable CT would provide support to help teach the leader of that project how to crowd fund; and the match fund will match whatever funds are raised.

In order for a town to participate in Sustainable CT, that town's administrative body must pass a formal resolution; there is a template on their website. There are certain required elements to the resolution, which can be adapted to the town's needs. As part of the resolution, there is a declaration of intention to pursue certification. This Commission or any other body in town could be the sustainability team, which leads the certification process.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that she spoke with the Town Manager regarding Sustainable CT. This may be something that the Town is interested in pursuing; it would need to be brought before the Town Council.

Mr. Shea made a motion to recommend to the Town Council that the Sustainable CT program provides the focus and the framework as to where the Town would like to go in terms of sustainability moving forward. Mr. Phelan seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

100PercentCTproject of People's Action for Clean Energy (PACE)

Ms. Tiezzi distributed the PACE report to the Commission members for their review.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Approval of 2020 Meeting Schedule

Mr. Shea made a motion to approve the 2020 meeting schedule as proposed. Mr. Kretz seconded the motion.

Ms. Winters suggested having more meetings throughout the year, possibly on a monthly basis. Mr. Zahren stated that this Commission could call special meetings throughout the year if necessary.

The motion was unanimously approved.

Meeting Clerk

Ms. Tiezzi and the Commission welcomed back Alison Sturgeon, Clerk.

VI. DO ANY BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS MEETING

There was none.

VII. ADJOURN

Mr. Kretz made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m. Mr. Macel seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.