

AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION  
AVON ROOM BLDG. #1 TOWN HALL  
MEETING MINUTES  
February 19, 2020

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, William Shea, Richard Kretz, Don Phelan, Christine Winter and Charles Harvell. Advisory member absent: Johnathan Craig. Staff member present: Grace Tiezzi, Assistant to the Town Manager.

Mr. Zahren introduced Charles Harvell to the Commission. Mr. Harvell stated that he has lived in Avon since January 2004. He retired ten years ago with a background in finance.

II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MEETING MINUTES – December 12<sup>th</sup>

Mr. Zahren made several edits to the December 12, 2019 minutes.

Mr. Shea made a motion to approve the December 12, 2019 minutes as amended. Mr. Phelan seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

III. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE – None.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Avon Village Center /Microgrid Update

Mr. Zahren stated that when they met with the CEO of Carphonato about a month ago, they were told that the developer was going to do some of the things that this Commission had requested in a memo to Mr. Peck back in April. At this meeting, they specifically asked why solar was not going on the Whole Foods building. The answer they received was that Whole Foods did not want solar. After some research, it was discovered that there is a solar developer who claims that he has the contract for solar on the Whole Foods building in Avon. A solar plan should be drafted prior to any building construction. It was requested that Ms. Tiezzi bring this information back to Town staff.

Mr. Zahren stated that in the past, there was some interest for installing windmills in the Town Center. He questioned if this was just a conceptual statement. He suggested pushing the issue in terms of a proposal as well as what it would take to get this permitted. There was a 3 acre piece of land that was offered for this purpose. He stated that it might be too late for a microgrid on the first three retail shops, although it is not too late for the other phases of this project.

Mr. Shea believes that the first goal of this Commission is to confirm that there will be solar panels going on the Whole Foods building. He suggested weaving in the community aspect of the Sustainable CT program while working with the town. Ms. Firestone stated that she was asked by Whole Foods to be a community liaison between the town and themselves. Mr. Shea stated that through Ms. Firestone, this Commission can find out if the solar will be going in; they can also learn if the developer will be installing the conduit under the roads for the microgrid. Although he is in favor of the microgrid, the more time spent on this topic, if it will not come to fruition, is the less time this Commission has to work on other issues.

Mr. Kretz suggested trying to push for the conduit so it will already be in place for any future development of a microgrid. In response to a question from Ms. Winters, Ms. Tiezzi stated that the role of the Town is to ensure that whatever is permitted is up to standard and regulation and that the buildings are up to state code. She stated that the Town cannot infringe on the developer's ability to complete the project in the

timeframe that they are required to complete it. Ms. Winters stated that she would like to see a good will effort from the developer that they will look into the viability of possibly putting in a microgrid.

Ms. Firestone stated that she will reach out to Whole Foods and tell them that Avon, as a community, is interested in sustainability and environmental stewardship and wants to partner with them in these ways.

Mr. Zahren stated that this Commission is limited on what they can ask the developer to do relative to sustainable building and development. The developer has been building to a higher standard for the Town Center than originally thought, for example, the insulation is of a higher quality. He stated that prior to the issuance of the next permit there may be an opportunity to request an even higher standard on the next building. Ms. Tiezzi stated that under state law, as long as the developer meets the state building code, the town cannot withhold a permit. She stated that things outside of the building are subject to the Planning and Zoning Commission; everything inside the building is subject to the state building code. The town's role is to issue the permits and perform inspections.

#### Sustainable CT Update

Mr. Zahren stated that the Town Council has endorsed the concept and is moving forward with Sustainable CT. He stated that the revenue projected from the property taxes on this new development is several million dollars. He suggested that the Town hire a part-time employee to look at sustainable initiatives. Ms. Tiezzi stated that there is a line item in this year's budget for a possible intern from the UConn Department of Public Policy. This would be a graduate level student in their second year of pursuing their master's degree in public administration. This would be a 15 hours per week position. She stated that a portion of this person's duties might be to assist with Sustainable CT. She reiterated that it would be a matter of priorities for the Town Council in deciding if this is something they will put in the budget.

Mr. Shea made a motion that the Avon Clean Energy Commission recommends that the Town Council consider hiring a part time individual or intern that could be dedicated to sustainable energy initiatives.

Mr. Kretz seconded the motion with the addition that grant writing skills would be valuable for the individual or intern to possess. The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Town Council approved the resolution for Sustainable CT. The Town will manage it, at this time, but would like to have a sustainability team comprised of staff with smaller working groups; community groups or individuals as necessary to accomplish more individual tasks at once. The Town Manager suggested that this Commission appoint a member to be the liaison to the team. Mr. Shea volunteered to be the liaison. There was a consensus among the Commission members to appoint Mr. Shea.

Ms. Winters requested that the Town get business cards for each member of this Commission. She feels that having business cards would be helpful for when Commission members are at meetings or talking to people in the community.

#### V. NEW BUSINESS

##### Request for Partnership – Sustainability Event

Carrie Firestone stated that One Community One Project did an anti-idling campaign, which is ongoing. They are now working on a campaign to talk about fast fashion since the fashion industry is a huge contributor to climate change. They are also working on food waste and how this is also a huge contributor to climate change; composting is a great remedy for this as well as shopping locally for fruits and vegetables. Tomorrow there will be a forum on tree planting and how to reinvent our yards.

In order to showcase how communities and individuals can remedy climate change, they are having a Farmington Valley Green Living Festival. They are trying to build a fun community event on May 16th from 1-4pm at the congregational church. There will be an electric car show in the parking lot, as well as a mega clothing swap. They have also invited Blue Earth Compost to talk about composting as well as invite area farms to showcase what they are doing in terms of CSAs. Each component of the festival needs volunteers if anyone on the Commission would be interested in helping. She invited the Avon Clean Energy Commission to officially partner with the festival, which would bring publicity to what they do. She is hopeful that this community event will bring as many people together in the community as possible. She asked that something be put in the Town newsletter as well.

Mr. Zahren recommended that the ACEC endorse this festival and officially partner with Carrie Firestone.

Ms. Winters made a motion that the Avon Clean Energy Commission officially partner with One Community One Project and the Farmington Valley Green Living Festival. Mr. Phelan seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Ms. Winters volunteered to be the Commission's representative at the festival. She suggested having a table with a more formal, durable poster that can be taken from venue to venue in the future as well. The poster could show the Commission's accomplishments as well as the new initiatives of the Sustainable CT as an educational piece. She stated that Home Energy Solutions has recently reduced their fee for home energy audits. She suggested that they advertise this at the festival as well.

Ms. Winters volunteered to park her electric Honda at the festival. Mr. Kretz will ask some of his connections with the Porsche Club to display the new electric Porsche, the Taycan. Ms. Firestone stated that she may bring My Farmington Valley Contest to the festival, which is a way for children to draw, paint or write poetry about natural places in the Farmington Valley. Ms. Winters suggested reaching out to the art teachers within the school system. Ms. Tiezzi suggested contacting Marissa and Carianne at the library as well.

Mr. Harvell stated that he installed solar on his home about 6 years ago through Solarize CT. He would like to see something like this program happen again in town. Mr. Zahren stated that this program has ended, although he suggested having a possible competition with surrounding towns in the Farmington Valley. Ms. Tiezzi suggested sending out an RFP for a preferred installer between the communities.

#### VI. ADJOURN

Mr. Shea made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m. Mr. Harvell seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted:  
Chairman Bernard Zahren

Attest: Alison Sturgeon, Clerk