**AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION**

**AVON ROOM BLDG. #1 TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**APRIL 19, 2017**

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Bernard Zahren in the Avon Room, Building 1, Town Hall. Members present: Chairman Bernard Zahren, Joseph Gentile, Jeffrey Macel, Don Phelan, William Shea and Richard Kretz. Member absent: Marty Kaplan. Advisory member present: Jonathan Craig. Staff members Grace Tiezzi, Assistant to the Town Manager and Ann Dearstyne, Town Clerk were also in attendance.

II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MEETING MINUTES – February 15th

Mr. Zahren questioned if there were any comments or changes to the February 15, 2017 minutes.

**VOTE:** Mr. Phelan made a motion to accept the February 15, 2017, minutes as written. Mr. Kretz seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

III. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

None.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Micro Grid RFP Update

Mr. Zahren stated that after meeting with Paul from Murtha Cullina, as well as the Celtic Consulting Group, Brandon Robertson decided to interview a second potential consulting firm. ECG Consulting is a firm from Long Island, NY. He stated that he was pleased with them. Mr. Macel felt that the firm had good approaches and good experience. Mr. Zahren stated that ECG has been selected and will work in conjunction with Murtha Cullina to put together the RFP for the State grant money for the micro grid. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she has reviewed the draft RFP, which will hopefully go out in early May, depending on a deeper review of the draft by other staff members as well as herself. Mr. Zahren stated that they left the issue with the Town Center development as a secondary step. They will be going in with the critical infrastructure of buildings in this area as well as going under the road to the fire station across Route 44 with what he expects to be a fairly small and simple gas fired turbine. Mr. Macel stated that there was a specific statutory section that allows the Town to do a public / private partnership under the Town’s name; the Town gets certain exemptions to cross right-of-ways. The Municipal Energy Exemption is a specific provision that Murtha Cullina has identified.

Mr. Zahren stated that if the micro grid is located on Town property, they will be permitted to sell the energy to other parties contiguous to the Town. He stated that there are many options, but they will be starting out simple with the RFP.

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the RFP will be advertised on the Department of Administrative Services website as well as in the Hartford Courant. She stated that many vendors have already called inquiring about the bid package.

Solar Panel Update

Mr. Zahren stated that they are disappointed that the Board of Education did not have a better handle on their cost savings. Ms. Tiezzi stated that Solar City said the increased cost to the Board of Education in fiscal year 2016 over 2015 was because of their overall use. She stated that Myles at the Board of Education said the increase couldn’t be pinpointed but was probably because of increased automation, different programming, as well as greater use of the air conditioning. Mr. Zahren stated that he would like a report on the kilowatt hours used from their solar. Mr. Craig stated that he would like another audit done of the schools, through Eversource, based on this increased use.

Regarding the Town Center, Mr. Gentile stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission recently met. Mr. Peck will be establishing firm deadlines with the Carpionato Group since they are running behind schedule. Mr. Peck has asked them to put forth their timetable regarding moving forward. Regarding the pile of dirt that still needs to be removed, he stated that Dunning and the Carpionato Group had a minor disagreement as to when it would be removed. It is now scheduled to be taken away on April 24th. If Dunning decides to use a different method or route to their facility on Brickyard Road in Farmington, the Planning and Zoning Commission has given Town staff permission to agree to those changes, if necessary.

Mr. Gentile also stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission discussed the roundabouts at length in terms of their location and elevation. The Carpionato Group will be told that the Town does not want any grade (less than 3%) in the Town Center. They realize it will be steep up into the roundabouts, although it will be graded at about 5-6 percent throughout the Town Center. Mr. Gentile stated that 5 roundabouts were being proposed, although the Planning and Zoning Commission does not want that many. The Carpionato Group will be revising the plan to have two 4-point roundabouts.

Mr. Gentile stated that the members of the Planning and Zoning Commission would like the Town Center to look like a typical New England town. What the developer is currently presenting is not what they were envisioning for the Town of Avon.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Eversource Outreach Campaign

Ms. Tiezzi stated that the letter was approved to print regarding the home energy audit, although she is unsure when it will be mailed out to residents. It tells residents that for a price of $124, an insured contractor will evaluate their home’s energy performance. The fee will be waived for income eligible residents. The average household will receive approximately $1,000 in free products and services. She stated that there will be a “kick-off” event on May 9th at the library. There will also be a “Lunch and Learn” at the Senior Center at the end of May. Event flyers will be hung around Town. Ms. Tiezzi stated that she will be posting information on the Town’s website, as well as in the Senior Center newsletter and possibly an email blast. If this campaign is successful, she is hopeful that the Town can possibly partner with the Chamber of Commerce in the future regarding businesses. Mr. Craig asked for a copy of this flyer to hand out at an Earth Day event tomorrow night. The Commission members agreed that this would be fine.

New Solar Legislation

Mr. Zahren stated that Mr. Kretz, Mr. Macel and he had an audience with the President of the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS). He stated that there is serious concern in the scientific community about the lack of attention and funding as well as the amount of disinformation about climate change and that it is a hoax. The one message that Mr. Zahren stated that he would propose this Commission adopt is that regardless of what people support politically, they should make climate change a politically neutral subject and embrace the fact that they need to believe in the good science and not the science that is being paid for by groups that are being backed by fossil fuel interests. He stated that things like what Ms. Tiezzi is doing in terms of the energy audit, which saves money and also reduces the carbon footprint, helps with the goals of the Town as a participant with things like the 20/20 Campaign.

Mr. Macel stated that the Union of Concerned Scientists is a credible group. This is not a political issue. He stated that they need to embrace the science as an important piece to this. Mr. Craig stated that he has recently been overseas and the natives are already seeing the effects of global warming. Mr. Zahren stated that it is not just the fact that the climate is changing, but at the rate that it is changing. He gave the Commission members an example of the Great Barrier Reef that is dying.

Mr. Gentile stated that he believes the issue is not climate change, but rather man’s impact on the climate. He stated that the goal is to look for alternative energy. Mr. Macel believes that UCS is an important group to follow and to individually support because they are independent. The general concensus is that global warming is happening and alternative energy helps.

Mr. Zahren stated that it is an important part of the community based responsibility that this Commission has to the Town of Avon to make sure people understand that when they do something like the energy audit, they can have an impact, not only on their electric bill, but on their carbon footprint as well. In terms of reducing carbon footprints, Mr. Kretz stated that he recently read an article about a landscaper who has a solar powered trailer to carry his re-chargeable equipment. This is something that the Town’s Public Works Department might want to consider for maintaining Fisher Meadows and other areas around Town.

Mr. Zahren stated that he and Mr. Macel have been working with the Town Manager regarding pending legislation in the State of Connecticut regarding virtual net metering and additional solar. He stated that he was, at first, unsure if the Town could lobby State Legislators on behalf of any potential proposed legislation. The Town Manager reminded him that this Commission is supposed to advocate in favor of favorable legislation for low carbon footprint and renewable energy. Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Town Manager wrote a letter to the Energy and Technology Committee regarding this issue, although he did not get any response, which is typical. She is unsure of what the status of any of those Bills are. Mr. Macel stated that there is a new Bill that was announced last week regarding brownfields. He stated that virtual net metering was allowed for State and Municipal and agricultural entities. The new Bill allows States to have solar on brownfields as well as the ability to sell back to municipalities. Mr. Zahren questioned what this could mean for the Town of Avon. Mr. Macel stated that ”behind the meter” allows the Town of Avon to build energy generation facilities somewhere in the load zone and use the credits somewhere else. Virtual net metering allows the Town to build them anywhere in the service territory and use that energy in Avon. For a Town like Avon that does not have a lot of open land, this is appealing because it can be located where land is more available. Mr. Craig questioned if the Town could, technically, make less expensive power with a micro-grid. Mr. Macel stated that money is saved on the transmission side of things; in order to generate that much power, you need a source of natural gas.

Mr. Zahren stated his concern regarding the way to get the most out of the money spent on a micro-grid is to also make it a co-generation plant. This means that the electricity you get from running a generator is fine, although the heat that is generated when you burn the fuel is sent out the exhaust pipe. He stated that if the heat can be trapped and used economically, then the value would be double or triple from the same investment in that generator. Mr. Zahren stated that the problem in the Town Hall buildings is that the buildings are already installed with a different kind of heating and air conditioning; it would not make sense to retrofit the buildings for something different. His hope is that the new Town Center or other adjacent properties could use some thermal energy as well as electric power, which would make the micro grid even more beneficial.

Mr. Zahren stated that this Commission needs to continue this dialogue and support, in general, the policies and principles behind why this Commission exists. It exists to find ways to reduce energy and the cost of that energy for the Town of Avon and its residents and businesses while at the same time reducing their carbon footprint.

Mr. Macel stated that Town of South Windsor runs a fuel cell; they have had significant dealings with Eversource. He stated that it might be helpful to talk with them about their experience on the micro grid side.

Mr. Zahren stated that the Town of Avon has two grants for LED lighting. Ms. Tiezzi stated that the Town has already done this work at the Town Hall complex for Buildings 5, 6, 7 & 8. She stated that Mr. Williams is in the process of doing the Department of Public Works complex. Also, the Avon High School parking lot was done in February 2017.

Regarding street lights, Ms. Tiezzi stated that Eversource has requested to convert the Town’s burnt out lights over to LED. She and Mr. Williams are considering the idea of the Town buying the street lights; they will be looking at the cost benefits of the street lights and converting the lights over themselves verses having Eversource do it. She stated that this will require a lot of information from Eversource, which takes time. She will continually update the Commission.

VI. ADJOURN

**VOTE:** Mr. Gentile made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:20. Mr. Phelan seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

 *Respectfully submitted:*

Chairman Bernard Zahren

*Attest:* Alison Sturgeon, Clerk