

**AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION  
TM CONFERENCE ROOM BLDG. #1 TOWN HALL  
MINUTES  
APRIL 15, 2015**

**I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 PM by Chairman Bernard Zahren in the Town Manager's Conference Room, Building 1 Town Hall. Members present: Chairman Bernard Zahren, Marty Kaplan, Joseph Gentile and new member Jeffrey Macel. Members absent: Brian Glenn, Richard Kretz and Mitch Kennedy. Advisory member present: Jonathan Craig. Also in attendance was staff member Town Clerk Ann Dearstyne.

**II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MEETING MINUTES – Dec. 17, 2014**

Mr. Zahren requested that the amount on page 1 cost per watt be changed to \$3.42.

**VOTE:** Mr. Kaplan motioned, Mr. Gentile seconded and all agreed to accept the December 17, 2014 minutes with the change.

**III. COMMUNICATIONS FROM AUDIENCE**

Rensselaer's masters' degree candidate Kevin Ehrlich attended the meeting in order to get information to compare how some towns were making steps to achieve carbon footprint savings in what they have done so far, what works and what plans they had for the future. Mr. Kaplan reminded that the town and BOE had their own software and that both were compatible with the EPA's documentation. Mr. Zahren gave a little background on the members and also the facilities that were around town. He continued that we had joined the Clean Communities Pledge whereby we were committed to reducing carbon emissions 20% by 2020. Mr. Zahren lamented that we were meeting standards by buying RECs but not by actually reducing the carbon footprint in the town. Mr. Kaplan and Ms. Dearstyne relayed that the Town Manager is working to select the department that would be responsible for pulling the information from the town side and that Mr. Ehrlich could contact Mr. Williams in Public Works for more assistance.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS: a. Completion of Solarize CT, b. Solar City**

Ms. Dearstyne reported that Solarize CT had ended April 10<sup>th</sup> with 235 initial contacts and 187 actual site visits. She continued that they presented 115 contracts and 23 of them have signed and that she is continuing to get calls. Mr. Zahren suggested that if you called Astrum Solar directly that they would still give you the same deal with financing and incentives available. Mr. Gentile questioned why they were in such a hurry when they had said was it rate related. Mr. Craig offered that it was based on a pot of money that was available. Mr. Macel referred to an Eversource e-mail that said there was some of those available that may have fallen out. He continued that his wife was a member of the homeowner's association in Buckingham that was limiting the location on the roof where the panels could be placed, which limited the houses that would be eligible. Mr. Macel continued that he had done some research and found that an association could limit these sorts of things if they were already written in the bylaws. Mr. Kaplan concurred that he lived in Farmington Woods and those roofs were owned and directed by the association. Mr. Macel wondered if the town could put out some policy statement and

encouraged homeowners to do some research on national policy. Mr. Gentile reported that he heard that placement on a western exposure was good too. Mr. Craig offered that southeast was best because clouds developed more in the afternoon. Mr. Zahren clarified that Astrum could only give an output based on placement of the panels whichever direction they were put and homeowners wouldn't realize as great a saving in their electric bills. He continued that he felt too that Astrum did not explain the financing very well. Mr. Zahren wanted the record to show that he was thankful to all the members who helped with the campaign and that Ms. Dearstyne did a wonderful job as well. Mr. Kaplan questioned why other towns did so well and Avon not as well. Ms. Dearstyne suggested it could have been weather related with the campaign launched in the dead of winter, and maybe too the town not allowing lawn signs. Mr. Zahren queried if the town could put a message in a newsletter that even if the campaign had ended that it was not too late to participate. Ms. Dearstyne noted that the current newsletter was at the printer and agreed it would have been a good time to include information. Mr. Zahren continued that an article can give several qualified vendors and installation and financing information. He added that writer Sloan Brewster of the Valley Press wanted to do a follow up article on the campaign and how we did and could include information in it that it wasn't too late to sign up.

#### V. NEW BUSINESS: a. Data accumulation from Town and BOE

Mr. Zahren asked Ms. Dearstyne how the school installations were going. She said the Public Works location was first and may be up and running with the Middle School second and the High School last. Mr. Zahren noted to Mr. Ehrlich that when these locations are up and running that they should have a significant impact on our net carbon emissions.

#### VI. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE COMMISSION a. Solar PV/renewable energy systems, b. Financing and other ways to receive support from State/National etc., c. Carbon footprint/software tracking/Clean Communities support

Mr. Zahren suggested a discussion on plans going forward. He reminded of the good things such as savings at the schools, new garage doors at Public Works, street lighting and now the PV installation. He continued that we've been weak on carrying the message to the residents. Mr. Zahren told of bills that were currently in front of the State legislature, one being the community solar which would allow a ground mount system and that many people could buy into it. He noted that the lobbyists for the utilities are also hard at work to slow the process and that he himself found it very difficult to do renewable energy business in Connecticut. Mr. Macel concurred that it was difficult to do business here as well. Mr. Zahren noted that the reason the electric rates went up so high was that the utility could not supply their needed quantities because last year the gas went to heating and not to supply these peaker plants, and they want the State to subsidize new natural gas pipe lines to access more gas. The increase did not come so ratepayers could subsidize solar but so the utilities could afford to meet the demand while the gas went to keeping the buildings warm over the generation of electricity. Mr. Kaplan noted that rate increases will continue and that it will take three to four years to put the gas piping in there. Mr. Zahren wanted to make the point that other states are doing more to give incentives to utilities to reduce the amount of power they sell.

Mr. Craig suggested that all those who've signed on would have a larger voice than our committee in getting the message out and that we could rally that. Ms. Dearstyne said that those were reached out to in a letter and then a follow up email and only one responded to come to one

of the meetings. Mr. Zahren suggested community solar could reach those whose houses were unsuitable for PV but were still interested. He continued that utilities are afraid to let go of their central electric generation model and lose their ratepayers. Mr. Gentile noted that we have a certain degree of due diligence in presenting this. He added that people looked at the payback amount, a roof that may have needed doing or a treed lot as obstacles to going for the solar and that we had done the best we could to get the message out. Mr. Zahren felt that the biggest reason for the low numbers was that people's roofs were covered with snow during the campaign.

Mr. Zahren proposed revisiting educating the residents about sustainability. Mr. Craig cited a political shift from the Middle East to self-sustainability in this country. He noted that the only reason we're interested is that Afghanistan, next to the Soviet Union, has the largest reserve accessible to us, of rare earth metals. He continued that we have so much energy available with the natural gas reserves that no one is worried about it anymore. Mr. Craig added that we are focusing on the little things and not seeing the big picture as it has changed our whole economy. Mr. Zahren added that the average American's political concern for climate change had dropped as one of their main concerns.

Mr. Kaplan spoke of the "green team" in Farmington Woods' ability to generate interest in 700 of 1200 condos getting an energy audit which led to improvements in window replacement and or attic insulation. He added that if people are not interested in audits then they are even less interested in solar. Mr. Zahren asked if someone would volunteer to call NU and find out how many residents in Avon have done the audit. Mr. Kaplan asked Mr. Ehrlich what he'd need from the towns. Mr. Ehrlich said he'd need the power usage from 2012 and more recent energy data. Mr. Kaplan suggested asking the other towns for the EPA Portfolio Standard table indicating what they've done.

## VII. DO ANY BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS MEETING

### VIII. ADJOURN

**VOTE:** Mr. Kaplan motioned, Mr. Gentile seconded and all agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 PM. None opposed.

*Respectfully Submitted:*  
Chairman Bernard Zahren

*Attest:* Susan Gatcomb, Clerk