

**AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION  
AVON ROOM BLDG. #1 TOWN HALL  
MINUTES  
OCTOBER 15, 2014**

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chairman Bernard Zahren in the Avon Room, Building 1 Town Hall. Members present: Chairman Bernard Zahren, Mitch Kennedy, Richard Kretz, Marty Kaplan, Joseph Gentile and Lisa Levin. Member absent: Brian Glenn. Advisory member present: Jonathan Craig. Also in attendance were staff members Assistant Town Manager Steve Bartha and Town Clerk Ann Dearstyne. SmartPower's Community Outreach Manager Bernie Pelletier also attended.

II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MEETING MINUTES – June 18, 2014

**VOTE:** Mr. Kaplan motioned, Dr. Kennedy seconded and all agreed to accept the June 18th minutes as presented. None opposed. Ms. Levin missed the vote.

III. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Mr. Pelletier's presentation follows.

IV. OLD BUSINESS: a. Update on SolarCity

Mr. Bartha updated the members on the status of the recently awarded solar installations. Staff met with the project manager from SolarCity and commented that they are nearly done with the system designs for the two schools and the Public Works facility. The next step is to meet with the Planning Commission for a site plan amendment approval. The Planning Commission recently approved a solar installation at the CREC School as well, so the municipal projects won't be a totally new concept. Avon Public Works will be the first recipient of a system, possibly starting in November. The schools will follow in the spring. Mr. Bartha noted that all three systems could be installed by June of next year. He noted too that a January and May town newsletter will provide updates on the progress. Mr. Zahren offered his congratulations, calling the award a great milestone. Ms. Levin asked if the classroom solar performance was to be handled by the schools or SolarCity. Mr. Bartha replied that they will provide kiosks that we can place where we want, work with some teachers or come in and have them do some educational work. Mr. Zahren asked if we could get some more student representatives as we've had in the past. Ms. Dearstyne said that the high school group was absorbed into the Sierra Club and that we haven't had any volunteers since then. Mr. Zahren asked if we could speak to Mr. Mala to try to get some more student representatives who could also be potentially helpful with outreach for the Solarize CT program.

V. NEW BUSINESS: a. Solarize CT, b. Approve the 2015 Meeting Schedule

Mr. Zahren would like the record to reflect his appreciation of Mr. Kaplan for his tenacity in getting Mr. Robertson to apply to participate in the program. Mr. Kaplan emphasized that the investment credits might not be there the next time around and that we could miss a great opportunity. Mr. Pelletier offered that CEFIA (State) gave \$.80/watt credit (cash

rebate) for the first 10kW and \$.40/watt for the next ten for residential. Mr. Pelletier cautioned that the credit may not be there by the turn of the calendar or that it could be greatly reduced.

Mr. Pelletier said he was attending this meeting for two purposes: 1) to answer any questions about solarizing and 2) to offer outreach to Avon as to what West Hartford has been doing. He explained that he works for SmartPower who is the publicist and Green Bank (CEFIA) has the money and runs the program. He continued that Avon is in the “prime” campaign which means it will get one installer. Mr. Pelletier urged to get involved in selecting an installer to keep in mind their technical capabilities, their work load and the character of the town compatible with the character of the installer. Ms. Dearstyne said they will be reviewing the installer’s bids next week and will choose one October 28<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Pelletier suggested checking with surrounding towns to discuss their choices for installers. Mr. Zahren commented that SolarCity focuses on leasing equipment vs. outright purchase for example. Mr. Pelletier guessed that 60% of the Avon residents would want to buy the systems, instead of leasing, and that several types of financing are available. He continued that the financing is geared to a residential installation and costs paid through property taxes as an option are for commercial ones.

Mr. Pelletier continued his presentation in describing the benefits of a good kick-off meeting. Ms. Dearstyne said they had already chosen a date, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 – 9:00 PM, at the Senior Center, expecting 80 – 100 people. She continued that his assistant could provide lots of related material for advertising which she will need. Ms. Dearstyne said Mr. Robertson is working on a letter encouraging joining the program. Mr. Pelletier noted that the installer should offer to pay for the mailings. He continued that Avon had approximately 6000 households for a cost of \$3,000.00 - \$4,000.00. Mr. Pelletier suggested using the Patch and local free papers. He questioned the local ordinances on the use of signage or lawn signage. Ms. Dearstyne said the town is very strict on signage. Mr. Pelletier suggested eliciting the current owners of solar power as good source for promotion. Mr. Craig offered to get his school involved and could have something ready for the launch date.

Mr. Pelletier cautioned that potential purchasers’ perception would be one of “just making these guys richer.” He added that another promotion method could be to get students to hang information on door knobs or use the local TV station. Mr. Kaplan asked if C-Tec Solar would provide free proposals and the feasibility of solar inspections. Mr. Pelletier said yes they could. He cautioned that you wouldn’t want to put solar on a 20 year old roof that would have to be redone in 10 years and recommended not installing the panels on a roof over ten years old. Mr. Pelletier noted that Green Bank required that once the contract was signed you’d have 270 days to install which would give you ample time if you would need to re-roof or cut trees.

Mr. Craig asked about the manufacturers of the panels. Mr. Pelletier said there are some that CEFIA won’t allow. He added that there are also several types of inverters offered. Mr. Kaplan explained that micro inverters were preferable because you wouldn’t lose the whole system if one went out unlike the central type. Mr. Pelletier countered that there

would be more things to go wrong with the micro inverters and suggested going with the manufacturer's warranty over a company that may not be in business in several years.

Mr. Pelletier urged the sooner the better to kick off this campaign because time was running out on how much money would still be available for incentives for the program. Mr. Gentile suggested that the winter would be a good time to launch as people tend to see their electric bills go higher because of the additional demands of the heating season. Ms. Dearstyne questioned how we could bring this together in time. Mr. Pelletier offered press releases that could get to the local papers for example. Ms. Dearstyne said either the Chief Elected Officer would write the letter or have the Town Manager do it. Posters and approved signs could be distributed throughout town or the library, senior center or firehouses. Mr. Pelletier suggested a series of other workshops be planned for the library or senior center with the installer the main "show", not the members. Mr. Craig said an energy audit would be a part of the package. Mr. Pelletier agreed and said the homeowner would be asked to submit to an authorized HES audit in order to get the solar panels and the credit from CEFIA. Mr. Pelletier reminded that he'd prefer to save energy instead of making clean energy. Dr. Kennedy noted that roof panels measure 30" x 72". Mr. Zahren guesses that a hypothetical 7kW system would cost \$25,000.00 initially, with credits \$13,000, with 9 year break even. Mr. Craig reminded to include extras such as site modifications that'd have to be made first.

Mr. Zahren suggested setting a sign-up goal. After some discussion, the members suggested a number of 70. Mr. Zahren asked the members the best way to achieve that figure. Mr. Craig would use education, as people could understand how it helps them and what the pitfalls are before they purchase, then they will feel more comfortable about it. Ms. Levin suggested utilizing the schools, the Superintendent and the science teachers, which could also help to solicit students to become liaisons and representatives on commissions – a springboard to get student representatives back to the group. Mr. Kaplan suggested ambassadors going around neighborhoods, knocking on doors. He said the best source would come from the current owners of solar panels and even if you could get half involved, having them showing their homes and how the system works would be a good way. Dr. Kennedy suggested a good piece to go in the media would be themed "what's in it for me". He continued that he could show a comparison of what the rate is now and what kinds of efficiencies could be done to lower it, and forecasts on what energy will cost with a couple of rate increases. Mr. Gentile suggested networking through social media such as Facebook or some of the women's groups. Mr. Craig noted that manufacturers were using Facebook already but that it's not specifically targeted to any community such as Avon. Mr. Pelletier added that someone could take it out of anonymity and share with a friend. Mr. Kretz suggested the women's groups such as Junior Women's or Newcomers or garden clubs. Mr. Bartha suggested groups such as ACORN or AEF as ones that do lots of outreach in raising funds for playgrounds for example. Mr. Pelletier offered that religious groups might also provide support and outreach opportunities.

Mr. Zahren asked the members for sub groups to be formed for the Solarize CT launch campaign: 1) for the education connection, 2) clubs and associations and affiliations, and

3) media, press and town newspapers. Mr. Craig and Ms. Levin volunteered for education and will contact Mr. Mala. Mr. Kaplan, Mr. Kretz and Mr. Zahren will work on clubs and associations. Dr. Kennedy and Mr. Gentile volunteered to work on the town's people. Mr. Zahren volunteered to help Ms. Dearstyne with the media piece. Mr. Zahren, Dr. Kennedy and Mr. Craig would like to attend the installer selection meeting. Ms. Levin asked about election day. Ms. Dearstyne said you could not get closer than 75' and there was no getting around that. Ms. Levin suggested a table and volunteered to man it for some of the time. Ms. Dearstyne noted that the election was a week before the launch date. Mr. Pelletier said that the most you'd get would be visual subconscious name recognition. He added that the campaign would be over in 18 weeks or mid March.

Ms. Dearstyne reminded that approval of next year's schedule was included in the agenda. Meetings are scheduled for the third Wednesday evening at 7:00PM in the Avon Room of Building 1 every other month for 2015 as follows: 2/18/15, 4/15/15, 6/17/15, 8/19/15, 10/21/15, 12/16/15 and 2/17/16 for 2016.

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. Pelletier discussed initiatives that West Hartford's Clean Energy Task Force took in 2014. He added too that he'd just like to compare notes with other towns in hopes of creating a better participation regionally comparable to what it was before. He began with the town's infrastructure whereby Peregrine was hired and identified numerous projects designed to improve efficiency. Street light improvements have been made such as converting to LED lighting. He continued that a hotel is being built next to the police station that will meet LEED gold. Mr. Pelletier noted that its Solarize campaign was completed in February with 69 installations contracted. Residential outreach was seen in the "Sagewell" campaign that used infra-red photographs to evaluate home energy efficiency. This led to HES assessment requests of 236, HVAC requests 145, solar of 155 and financing 64 by residents. He mentioned that recycling saves tons of energy as well as money and is working with businesses and residents. Internally they are rewriting their energy plan as most of the items have been met. Mr. Pelletier continued that they are forming a recycling subcommittee and providing oversight for compostable material in school kitchens. Reviewing a STEM demand load management system and outreach to other towns such as Harford and Avon are also included as efforts the task force is making.

Mr. Bartha announced that this would be his last meeting with the Clean Energy Commission as he was taking a position in a town in Massachusetts. Everyone wished him well and thanked him for all of his hard work. He said he has learned a lot too.

VII. DO ANY BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS MEETING

VIII. ADJOURN

**VOTE:** Mr. Kaplan motioned, Ms. Levin seconded and all agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:41PM. None opposed.

*Respectfully submitted:*  
Chairman Bernard Zahren

*Attest:* Susan Gatcomb, Clerk