

**AVON CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION
AVON ROOM BLDG. #1 TOWN HALL
MINUTES
DECEMBER 17, 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 Town Manager Brandon Robertson and Town Clerk Ann Dearstyne. SmartPower representative Kate Donnelly, Astrum Solar Director of Community Programs Jill Appel and SolarCity representative Josh Abrams were also in attendance.

II. APPROVAL OF THE PRECEDING MEETING MINUTES: Oct. 15th

VOTE: Dr. Kennedy motioned, Mr. Gentile seconded and all agreed to accept the October 15th meeting minutes as presented. None opposed.

III. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Ms. Donnelly, Ms. Appel and Mr. Abrams made presentations under Old Business.

IV. OLD BUSINESS: a. Solarize CT - Astrum and SmartPower, b. Solar City

Mr. Zahren told of a meeting he recently attended regarding a Clean Communities program with other towns. He also made note of an upcoming meeting with Murtha Cullina on January 22, 2015, with Mr. Robertson as a member on the panel.

Ms. Donnelly introduced herself and Ms. Appel, saying they were here to discuss the Solarize Avon program and solicit ways to offer help to the community. Ms. Appel reported that they have over 70 leads with a high qualification rate. She noted that they are running into some shading issues and figured they'd need another 300 leads over the course of the project, calculating that approximately 20% of those turn into sales. Ms. Appel continued that she has met with John Spang of the high school, noting that one area they like to use is outreach through the schools and that she hopes to have a program ready to launch in January. She continued that the more residents participated, the lower the cost to each household. Mr. Zahren reminded that ours was a fixed cost of \$3.42/watt. Ms. Appel also met with Library Director Glenn Grube to put together a library display. She asked that a member of the Commission work with her as a local connection with the library and schools. Mr. Kretz offered to help with the library while Ms. Levin offered to work with the schools. Ms. Levin offered that Mr. Craig had also helped with the schools in the past. Mr. Zahren mentioned that they had met with Mr. Mala, who they found to be extremely supportive, and his having a "green team" as well. He continued that they actually have a course they teach to tenth graders about renewable energy. Ms. Donnelly cautioned that the incentives were being stepped down from the CT Green Bank and encouraged anyone who knew of anyone to hurry because the amounts were going to go down after the end of the year. She said the number will be announced Friday. Ms. Donnelly explained that so many

have taken advantage of the incentive monies that were available and that the amount has gone down. Ms. Levin asked for clarification. Ms. Donnelly said that right now the 30% State incentive to homeowners will be reduced after December. Mr. Gentile noted that the break even time will increase. Ms. Donnelly countered that homeowners will get more money from the tax rebate incentive (available for two more years) for those who purchase outright. Mr. Zahren said that he didn't realize that the incentive could change in the middle of the program. Ms. Appel noted too that heavier shading results in less power generation which also results in a longer pay back period. She added that 10 years seemed to be the limit of what potential purchasers find acceptable.

Ms. Appel noted that her approach to the schools normally has been one of finding 5 or 6 kids who were highly motivated and that this way was more effective than sending information home with the students. She added that she preferred the use of emails vs. paper, noting the cutting of trees. Mr. Zahren preferred a broader reach through taking information home by all the students and not just a handful. Mr. Craig reminded that Mr. Mala had a team made up of students and teachers who were working on educational programs. Mr. Craig relayed that he had a grant "CT Kids Fueling the Future" which included Avon that promoted hands on activities for students.

Ms. Levin asked if getting the kids to canvas door-to-door had been effective. Ms. Donnelly said no, that the two towns who used this method were not successful. Ms. Levin felt that it could work in Avon. Ms. Donnelly asked who would be the best contact to send an email blast through the schools. Ms. Dearstynne offered to send it through her to Mr. Mala. Mr. Zahren noted that the media had been used as well as the Chamber of Commerce to get the word out. Mr. Kaplan reminded that a good source for publicity would come from current owners of solar. Mr. Craig offered to host a workshop at his school, perhaps in February. Ms. Donnelly said she was looking for current solar owners for testimonials or pictures to share. Mr. Gentile reminded that articles needed to go out in the local papers. Ms. Donnelly noted that currently in the State of Connecticut, when you accept the CEFIA incentives, you do not own the RECs.

Ms. Appel asked if it would be alright to include the names and contact numbers of the group members or pictures or testimonials of solar owners with the information that will be displayed at the library. Mr. Zahren, Dr. Kennedy and Mr. Craig offered their business numbers. Ms. Donnelly suggested that a facebook account would be helpful. The members thanked Ms. Donnelly and Ms. Appel for their presentations.

Mr. Abrams discussed the status of the solar panel project that will be placed on the town and school buildings. Plan review and permit applications have been completed for the DPW portion. Next he will be meeting with Johns Manville (roofer) to do a pre-roof inspection, and who will also be doing one during the installation, with a post inspection as well. Johns Manville will provide and maintain the warranty to the town. The start date should be sometime in January and they do work year round. Mr. Abrams continued that the two school buildings have presented more of a challenge with structural issues. He said the roofs were not as robust as they had hoped and they are currently reviewing their latest designs to account for this. Mr. Abrams continued that they require a 35# snow load as well as a 95mph wind tolerance and given that the schools were built much earlier, they do not meet their requirements of today. Ms. Levin questioned that she thought the middle school roof was specifically built to accommodate solar panels. Mr.

Abrams said it was designed for a different type of solar panel called “thin film” and the company that made them has gone bankrupt. He continued that the panels they use generate twice as much or more than the thin film type and use string inverters to answer Mr. Kaplan’s question. Mr. Zahren asked if it would cost the town more money. Mr. Abrams said that it may but that they are working on a better design solution given that their costs are impacted. He said he’d like to begin on the high school the last week of February, first week of March. Mr. Abrams said the next step after the design phase for the middle and high schools will be the planning board review. Mr. Zahren thanked him for his update.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

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 asked if any of the subcommittees had anything to report. Mr. Zahren continued that he spoke to Melissa Everett, who runs the Clean Water Initiative that lobbies for many things, about meetings in the spring, hoping to regionalize the towns’ energy task force committees. He added that he asked her about carbon footprint monitoring and found that there was a lot of progress in standardizing through the EPA. He sees the problem in Avon as one of buying the RECs but not really doing anything about clean energy. He said we should be concentrating on reducing the carbon footprint by our businesses, residents and the town itself and that we were doing a good job too. Mr. Zahren reminded that the end of next year we would be reaching one of our benchmarks in the energy plan to reduce our energy use by square foot but asked how we are measuring that. Mr. Zahren feels we have met the goal but how are we going to publicize it. Ms. Dearstyne noted that the schools and town had different methods to measure it. Dr. Kennedy suggested taking a snapshot in January and again in June to see where we are. He added that if we are using EnergyStar that data should be being plugged in every month. Ms. Dearstyne said that she would check into it and offered that the Public Works was tracking it very well but the problem could lie with the communication between the town’s (Facility Dude) and school’s separate programs. Mr. Kaplan suggested that CEFIA could provide a person to do this for us.

Mr. Zahren wished everyone a wonderful holiday and members collectively thanked Ms. Levin for all of her hard work on the Commission.

VII. DO ANY BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS MEETING

VIII. ADJOURN

VOTE: Ms. Levin motioned, Dr. Kennedy seconded and all agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:15PM. None opposed.

Respectfully submitted:
Chairman Bernard Zahren

Attest: Susan Gatcomb, Clerk