

12-4-17 Westport Energy Committee Meeting

The Monday 12/4/17 meeting of the Energy Committee was called to order by Chairman Tony Connors at 7:01 PM. Other members present were Rick Malis, Dick Brewer, Max Kohlenberg, Buzz Brownlee, Walter Barnes, and Karl Daxland. Absent was Michael Sullivan.

The minutes of the 4/3/17 meeting were approved as written.

The first item on the agenda brought up by Chairman Connors was the LED streetlight program. He went on to say that the Town has received a grant from the Mass Department of Energy Resources for this program. The state has arranged for a contractor to review the current street light situation. The 200 street lights are currently owned by Eversource and National Grid. They are leased to the Town at a cost of around \$18,000 which includes the electricity. The Town will have to purchase these at a cost of \$1.50 to \$2.00 per street light. The capital needed to purchase the LED lights will be added to the warrant and will have to be passed at the Annual Town Meeting in May. The total cost for LED street lights will be \$60,000 at \$300 per streetlight. The grant will reimburse the Town for 30% of this. In addition, the utility companies will reimburse 15 to 20% of the cost. The net cost to the Town will be \$30,000 to \$35,000. The service contract and electricity charge for the LED lighting system will be around \$2000 a year. The estimated payback is 3 to 4 years.

The Chairman then turned the Committee's attention to the electric vehicle program and a full discussion ensued. Mr. Connors announced that the lease for the electric vehicle expires this June and the state agency in charge of the program does not have the funding to continue the program at this time. Possible options are to turn the vehicle in; turn it in and lease another; or buy the vehicle. Another consideration is to fund a fuel-efficient vehicle program using a Green Community grant. One limiting factor in the use of the present electric vehicle is the small number of Town employees who actually use it. A better audit program might be in order. With the grant, the electric vehicle saved the Town around \$200 a month for the first twelve to eighteen months of the program. Mr. Brownlee noted that the state recently awarded Westport a certificate of recognition for using an electric vehicle. The present vehicle has a range of around 90 miles per total charge whereas new electric vehicles have ranges in the hundreds of miles per total charge.

Mr. Connors then gave an update on the possibility of commercial solar systems on Town/private land. A subcommittee made up of the Chairman and Mr. Brewer have been working on this. At one point, a developer had proposed building a solar farm on the Town landfill, but this fell through apparently due to uncertainties with the commercial solar incentive program provided by the state. In any case, the size of the landfill site would only allow for an installation of under a megawatt. Tim King, Town Administrator, suggested that a package of Town land sites may be more appealing to potential developers. The subcommittee came up with two Town owned sites for consideration. One is around 29 acres off Drift Road south of Fallon Drive. The second is also of suitable acreage and is located behind the high school. However, there may be wetland issues pertaining to this parcel. The subcommittee will continue to work on this matter.

Chief Pelletier of the Westport Police Department recently expressed an interest to Mr. Connors of putting solar on the roof of the new police station. One of the major drawbacks is that most of the roof area faces in the east and west directions. The new police station is estimated to increase the electricity use on an annual basis 2x from the current usage of around 96,000 kilowatts for the current station.

The next item on the agenda was Green Communities. The most important issue dealing with this presently is the Stretch Code. The Stretch Code Committee is presently working on this matter and consists of Tony Connors, Dick Brewer, and Walter Barnes. Mr. Connors and Mr. Barnes had a working session with Tim King and Ralph Souza much earlier in the year. The Building Inspector gave his support for the Stretch Code. After discussion, it was decided that Mr. Souza would arrange a meeting between the subcommittee and a group of developers to discuss the Stretch Code. This meeting never materialized. The subcommittee will continue to work on the Stretch Code issue with the goal of getting it on the warrant for the May 1 Annual Town Meeting. Mr. Kohlenberg noted that the cost of the Stretch Code might drive away perspective residents who wanted to build in Westport, but that this is questionable when considering that the cost of this part of the building code per new home would be a very small percentage of the overall cost.

Mr. Connors expressed how impressed he was with the updated information which Mr. Brownlee was posting for public information on the website.

The Committee then took up the Electric Aggregation Program as a topic of new business. Mr. Connors stated the two-year period of the program ends this year, but the Town has decided to sign up for the next two-year period which starts in 2018. Citizens will be able to opt out of the new program as they could the old one. As far as the old one, citizens saved money on their electricity during the two-year period over what they would have paid as customers of Eversource or National Grid. The expected cost of the new program is around 10.5 cents per kilowatt hour compared to a cost of 9.5 cents for the current program. The expected cost for Eversource for next year is believed to be around 13 cents.

Following discussion, the next meeting was tentatively planned for a Monday in February.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Walter Barnes