

April 8, 2013 Westport Energy Committee Meeting Minutes

The Monday, 4/8/13 meeting of the Energy Committee in the Westport Town Hall was called to order 7:00 PM by Chairman Tony Connors. Other members present were Ed Goldberg, Max Kohlenberg, Antone Vieira, Karl Daxland, John Ciccotelli, and Walter Barnes. Absent were Paul Velho and Kathy Cummings. Also present was Leo Brooks, Mike Sullivan (Economic Development Task Force) (7:15 PM) and Jim Whiten of the Planning Board.

Update on meeting with Selectmen April 1st on Landfill Solar Project. The Energy Committee recommendation regarding the PPA and the Landfill Lease were presented to the Board of Selectmen. The Selectmen would not sign because they want a price in the contracts. The Westport landfill project is behind a Dartmouth project but Westport's project does not require changes to the substation. The Selectmen want the guidance of the Energy Committee on the cost/benefit of two approaches: one out of town, such as the cranberry bog project called Future Generation of Plymouth, and another project on Westport Town land. The Selectmen also want numbers. It was pointed out that the Westport Town Landfill Project still leaves 1.4 Million KWH's available for other approaches.

Plans/Sub-committees for Net Metering coverage for remaining electricity consumption. Chairman Connors encouraged setting up two subcommittees.. Mr. Ciccotelli wondered if the Town could purchase land for a project. Mr. Goldberg had spoken with the CEC on the matter and said it was not economical for the Town to own and operate such a project. Indeed, he said no town in the Commonwealth was doing this. He also stated that a tax free organization will not get the tax write offs. Mr. Kohlenberg added that he was not interested in the liability or the capitalization required for the town. Mr. Kohlenberg along with Mr. Vieira, Mr. Connors, and Mr. Daxland will research the option of a project in the Town. Mr. Goldberg, Mr. Connors, Mr. Barnes and Mr. Ciccotelli will research a PPA out of Town.

Review/recommendation of proposed Solar By-Law. Jim Whiten of the Planning Board said that 60% and not 2/3rds was needed for approval at the Special Town Meeting. The Finance Committee felt the By-Law should be taken up at the Annual Town Meeting. There have been changes in the proposed Solar By-Law made by the Planning Board. A small scale solar project is allowed anywhere in Town and a large scale can be anywhere but, if in a commercial zone, requires a site plan review, and if in a residential zone, requires a special plan review considering setbacks, environment, neighborhood impacts, clear cutting, and wetlands, etc. and a Planning Board special permit. All abutters within 300 feet must be notified before the project permits. Mr. Whiten said setbacks are different for different areas and a "reasonable regulation" is in keeping with MA General Law which does not allow an "unreasonable regulation." Solar farms will go where they are economically feasible. Mr. Barnes wanted to maintain the right to comment in a formal way on solar arrays, to have financial surety on any property, and removal of those facilities when project lifespan is over. Mr. Whiten spoke of the value to a developer in salvaging the solar panels. The Planning Board has the ability to hire experts to help in analyzing the proposed installation of commercial facilities. Mr. Brooks commented on inverters, solar panels and less deterioration today. The Energy Committee moved and voted unanimously to recommend the proposed Solar By-Law.

Mike Sullivan spoke of working with the Planning Board from an economic development standpoint. He stated that certifications of no hazardous wastes with solar panels are available today. He cited the educational efforts for the solar industry including a Community Solar Coach Program and a Commonwealth Two Solar Program. He encouraged farm applications and underutilized lands RFP's. Mr. Connors said some programs target the residential sector with group buying power and active sustainability organizations. Mr. Connors and Mr. Vieira agreed that the clamor for neighborhood net metering is not as much in independent Westport. There is more interest in individual efforts possibly. Mr. Kohlenberg said that the movement for alternative energy has two sides: Is it the right thing to do? And is it economically feasible?

There was no presentation by Jennifer Marshall Grantham on SouthCoast Energy Challenge which was listed on the agenda as tentative.

The next meeting will be Monday, 6/10/13 at 7:00 PM in the Town Hall.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Anne Barnes