

2/13/17 Westport Energy Committee Meeting Minutes

The Monday 2/13/17 meeting of the Energy Committee in the Town Hall second floor accessory conference room was called to order by Chairman Tony Connors at 7:00 PM. Other members present were Karl Daxland, Max Kohlenberg, Michael Sullivan, Richard Brewer, Buzz Brownlee and Walter Barnes.

The minutes of 12/19/16 were reviewed and corrections made. The minutes were then approved as amended.

Chairman Connors introduced Mr. Rick Malis, a new town resident, who has an interest in becoming a member of the Energy Committee.

Copies of the outline on the 1/26/17 webinar with Zak Farkes, Borrego Project Engineer, were distributed during the meeting. The presentation was entitled, "Developing Solar on Landfills: A Project Study," and focused on the City of Worcester, MA project.

Mr. Connors then initiated a discussion of the status of the web page for the Energy Committee on the town website. The hope is to allow public participation consisting of questions and comments on the website. The possibility of this being done is still being researched by Mr. Brownlee and Mr. Connors. Mr. Brownlee expressed an interest in changing the photographs on the web page. One leading possibility would be to feature the electric car and the charging station.

The recently formed subcommittee of Chairman Connors, Mr. Barnes, and Mr. Brewer did not meet since the last meeting.

Mr. Barnes gave an update on LED streetlights. He was able to enroll in the Department of Energy Resources webinar on LED streetlights given on February 2, 2017. His comments were based on the subsequent outline released after the lecture.

The state program for the \$11.4 million Municipal LED streetlight conversion is being administered by MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Council), which is the RPA (Regional Planning Agency) for Boston. The program provides grant funding for 30% of materials and installation costs applied after the utility incentives are subtracted and covers cobrahead streetlights and standard controls. The two steps to LED retrofit are to buy back the streetlights from the utility and procure design, equipment, and installation services. MAPC works with towns on collective procurement of materials and installation. Also, to qualify for the grant, a third party expert must complete a streetlight audit within the past three years and the luminaries are "control ready" with 7-pin receptacles. Moving ahead with financing for this project will require town meeting approval. LED streetlight benefits include reduced energy use of 50 to 70%, more even light distribution, longer life as LEDs are rated for over 20 years compared to HPS (high pressure sodium) which last 5 to 8 years, and improved color rendering. As for project costs, the paybacks tend to be 5 to 7 years with utility incentives. A conservative estimate is a cost of \$400 per light and an \$80 utility incentive per light. There is an average \$40 energy savings per light.

Chairman Connors then opened up a discussion of the electric vehicle program. We have to begin planning for when the 3-year lease on the current program expires. There is a buy-back provision in the lease. A state grant for electric vehicles will continue. Mr. Sullivan indicated an audit of the current

program would be helpful in moving ahead. Mr. Brownlee felt it would be useful to know how much electricity the electric vehicle used and its cost.

The next topic for discussion was solar on town/private land. Mr. Connors said that there are now 4 solar farms on private land that have been approved and 2 more that are in the process of getting approved. The subcommittee for the development of solar farms on town land found 2 properties owned by the town which may be feasible for solar development. One of the two properties is known to be free and clear of tax liens. Power Management is to weigh in on both properties. The town will be receiving money for any operational solar farms in town from the negotiated PILOT program.

The discussion then turned to the opportunity for community solar programs. This program would allow homeowners to have a stake in a solar farm. By doing this, they could participate directly in renewable energy and benefit in a cost savings of their electricity of around 2.5%. This could be a consideration for the Town Landfill if a private developer is not found to develop it in the traditional sense.

Chairman Connors then took up Green Communities. Mr. Barnes reported it was announced in the Standard Times in early February that Dartmouth, New Bedford, and 28 other communities have been designated as green communities by the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources. These communities are now eligible to receive grant money for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects. The article went on to say that the communities in the program have committed to reduce energy consumption and emissions. The program can provide up to \$20 million a year to qualified cities and towns. As of now, Dartmouth is eligible for \$223,750 and New Bedford \$604,305. Presently around 65% of the population of the state are benefiting from Green Community grants. Barnes stressed that Westport should become a Green Community in order to save the taxpayers of this town substantial amounts of money for meaningful projects while at the same time reducing our carbon footprint. He felt that the Green Communities program symbolizes what the Energy Committee is all about.

Mr. Brewer expressed that it made sense for Westport to become a Green Community. The town will lose out if it doesn't. Mr. Kohlenburg wanted to know if there were any reasons not to pursue becoming a "Green Community." Mr. Sullivan indicated that imposing codes on residents and their costs should not be onerous.

Mr. Connors proposed a subcommittee meeting regarding the "Green Communities" with Tim King, Town Administrator; Seth Pickering, Southeast Regional Coordinator for "Green Communities"; and Ralph Souza, Building Inspector.

The next committee meeting was tentatively scheduled for Monday, March 27.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:25 PM.

Respectively submitted by Walter Barnes

