

4-3-17 Westport Energy Committee Meeting

The Monday 4/3/17 meeting of the Energy Committee in the Town Hall accessory conference room was called to order by Chairman Tony Connors at 7:03 PM. Other members present were Karl Daxland, Richard Brewer, Buzz Brownlee, Rick Malis, and Walter Barnes. Absent were Max Kohlenberg and Michael Sullivan.

The minutes of the 2/13/17 meeting were approved as written.

Mr. Brownlee then began a discussion of updates for the Energy Committee on the town Energy Committee section of the Town of Westport website. There are now electric car photos in the electric car program section under current programs. The electric aggregation program section includes charts for Eversource and National Grid rate projections. This program is a two year program which lasts until the end of 2017. This program will end with a net savings to town residents. Also, there is a section in the current programs on the Borrego Solar contract, which covers a twenty-year period. The LED program is listed under programs pending.

Chairman Connors then turned to the status of the LED streetlight program. Mr. Barnes indicated that the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources grant funding was accessed through the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. MAPC is very helpful to towns in this process. The first requirement is that the town own their streetlights, which Westport does not at this time. However, the cost of purchase from the utility companies is minimal. As far as Mr. Barnes is aware, the program is available at least until the end of 2017. The purchase has to be approved by Town Meeting. Chairman Connors will be speaking with the town administrator about moving ahead with this program.

The next order of business brought up by Chairman Connors was the electric vehicle program. The charging station as of now is not operational so that the electric vehicle is not currently being used. The installer has been contacted. The chairman reported that there is currently an estimated savings of 100 to 150 dollars a month. If possible, a full audit of the electric vehicle program would be helpful in moving forward. There is still an on-going rebate program. Information to date indicates that it would be more cost efficient to continue to lease rather than purchase outright. The town administrator is in favor of leasing two vehicles the next time around. The Board of Health and the Planning Board would be potential users. Everyone involved will continue to look for ways to incentivize use. Further discussion with Tim King, town administrator, is indicated.

Chairman Connors then opened up discussion of solar installations on town/private land and on the town landfill. Further information on solar would be helpful for the public. One option for those who want an alternative to putting solar on their properties would be community solar. However, of the six companies with operational solar farms or soon to be in Westport, none offer community solar. One can support renewable energy with their power company by paying a higher fee as indicated on their bills. The town would receive more money for a solar farm on town owned land as there would be a lease payment in addition to the pilot payment. The landfill project is still up in the air. This is a small site which makes it less appealing to developers. One approach would be to combine the landfill site with one or two other town-owned sites. These sites must be free of any liens. The solar farms in operation or on the drawing board in Westport average 2 or more megawatts/year at a return to the town of around \$10,000/yr. per megawatt under the pilot program. Home owners installing solar

receive both federal and state tax credits. Systems allowing for storage of excess electricity generated by home solar panels should be available in the future.

Chairman Connors next began a discussion of Green Communities. The subcommittee had a meeting in Town Hall on 3/30/17 regarding Green Communities. In attendance were Chairman Connors, Mr. Barnes, Seth Pickering of Green Communities, building inspector Ralph Souza, and town administrator Tim King. This was an important meeting as the town would be eligible for hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants for energy improvements if it became a Green Community. Around 190 of 351 towns are already enrolled in the program. The town presently is close to meeting the five criteria for becoming a Green Community. The major issue is criteria five which applies to new housing under the Stretch Code. The Stretch Code requirements would add to the building costs, but these would be made up over time by the energy savings. Furthermore, the evolving building code set by the state may soon reach the requirements of the Stretch Code. Mr. Souza stated that he would support the Stretch Code, but the contractors are generally opposed to it because it adds to building costs. Therefore, it was decided to invite the contractors to a meeting to discuss the matter with them. Mr. Souza will provide a list of contractors for Chairman Connors. The public has the final say to becoming a Green Community because a majority vote is required by Town Meeting.

Chairman Connors welcomed Rick Malis as the newest member of the Energy Committee.

Mr. Brewer indicated that Eversource has applied for increased electricity rates starting in 2018. Chairman Connors thought it would be useful to know the future of the aggregation program after the present contract ends this year. Further research is in order.

The last item of business was a possible date for the next meeting. This could be the first Monday in May.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Walter Barnes