

12/7/15 Westport Energy Committee Meeting Minutes

The Monday 12/7/15 meeting of the Energy Committee in the Selectmen's Conference Room was called to order by Chairman Tony Connors at approximately 7:00 PM. Other members present were Mike Sullivan, Karl Daxland, Max Kohlenberg, Leo Brooks, and Walter Barnes. Absent was John Ciccotelli.

Chairman Connors began the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The minutes of the Energy Committee of 5/26/15 were approved by the members.

Chairman Connors then began a discussion of the electric vehicle charging station. He reported that the vehicle has been well used. The major users are the Town Administrator, the Assessor's Office, and the Building Inspector. The Building Inspector has used the vehicle the most. In the past Ed Goldberg suggested putting a logo on the vehicle indicating the Town was saving energy by the vehicle's use. The charging station is located adjacent to the back of the Town Hall. There is a sign out front indicating the charging station which is available to the public. The high amperage station takes about two hours to obtain a full charge.

Chairman Connors went on to discuss the landfill lease for the solar farm. Bids were made on the RFP but Town Counsel found an error in the document and had to redo it. The due date for the bids to be received is now 1/5/16. That is the current status of the ¾ to 1 megawatt solar farm.

The next item was the SRPEDD Energy Aggregation Program. Chairman Connors reported that this had been voted on at Town Meeting last spring. This will start in January 2016 and all Westport homeowners are automatically enrolled. They can opt out without penalty at any time. Details are present on the home page at the Town's website. The enrollment period is two years and the electricity charge is 9.5 cents per kilowatt hour. In closing discussion on this item, Leo Brooks predicted that gas and electricity prices would be going up dramatically in the future.

Chairman Connors then reported on the LED street lights. Tim King, Town Administrator, is doing most of the ground work. The plan is for the Town to buy the street lights from Eversource and National Grid and pay to install the new LED lights. This involves around 200 street lights. The big question is the cost to buy the lights from the utilities. This may not be expensive. For one thing, the old street light may be fully depreciated.

Chairman Connors reported that there is an opening for one new member of the Energy Committee. Ed Goldberg resigned because he is no longer a resident of Westport. John Ciccotelli is planning to continue on the committee. To conduct an official meeting with seven members, a quorum of four members is required.

New business consisted of a discussion of two items. The first one was about the Town's electricity and gas contracts at a recent Selectmen's meeting. The Town presently pays 10.4 cents for electricity through Direct Energy. The Town has been informed that it can enroll in a new 12 months contract at 8.8 cents per kilowatt hour or a 24 months contract at 9.5 cents per kilowatt hour. The Board of Selectmen felt more comfortable with the 12 month contract. Michael Sullivan said the Selectmen were

moving ahead with the 12 month contract but were interested in hearing the opinion of the Energy Committee. Chairman Connors agreed with the Town's decision and asked for a vote. The Energy Committee vote was unanimous to recommend a one year contract.

The second item of new business was a review of Town owned parcels to potentially lease for solar development. Chairman Connors reported that this was with the encouragement of Power Management. Power Management would manage the process with no cost to the Town. After proper investigation, any land suitable for a solar farm would be put out to bid. The Town would not use the electricity and would receive a leasing fee. Tim King and Tony Connors reviewed the Town Assessor's list and came up with about a dozen pieces of land for further consideration. These properties are covered either by Eversource or National Grid. Power Management would be stringent in their evaluation as they are paid by the developer. Also, there is still uncertainty about what the new state regulations will be regarding solar energy. In any case, it might be beneficial for the Town to filter out feasible solar sites. The Committee could be helpful in this process by further evaluating the list of sites. To do this review, a subcommittee consisting of Karl Daxland, Tony Connors, and Max Kohlenberg was formed. Tony Connors provided a copy of Google Earth of the sites to Walter Barnes. It should be noted that the Planning Board and Conservation Commission would be involved with any serious solar farm proposals.

Leo Brooks expressed that it would be a good idea for a liaison between the Energy Committee and the School Building Committee in regards to the consideration of all renewables including co-generation. Co-generation involves fuel cell technology with the generation of heat, electricity, and cooling. Fuel cells can use natural gas or bio-gas. Current gas pipelines can transport bio-gas. Michael Sullivan said the School Building Committee will be using a consulting firm to help determine what their needs are.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Walter F. Barnes