

10/24/16 Westport Energy Committee Meeting Minutes

The Monday 10/24/16 meeting of the Energy Committee in the Selectmen's Conference Room was called to order by Chairman Tony Connors at 7:00 PM. Other members present were Richard Brewer, Buzz Brownlee, Michael Sullivan, and Walter Barnes. Absent were Max Kohlenberg and Karl Daxland.

Chairman Connors took up the matter of the Energy Committee on the town website as the first topic of discussion on the agenda. At some point, it might be interesting to know the number of visitors to the website. The town electric car program could be a featured item. The Committee should consider a revision of the mission statement on the website. Another consideration would be an E-mail account which would encourage citizens to communicate with the Committee.

The next item was a brief discussion of the electric vehicle program. Mr. Barnes noted that the IRS allowed a generous reimbursement program for the use of an employee's vehicle for town business. Mr. Sullivan noted that the reimbursement is presently 55.4 cents. Certain Town employees are encouraged to use the electric car. It is not always readily available. The consensus is that the program should be continued after the 3-year lease is up. A major consideration will be whether or not to purchase the present car or start a new lease.

Chairman Connors then initiated a discussion of the next steps to be taken on LED streetlights. We need to know more about the state program of financial aid to towns converting to LED streetlights. Governor Baker apparently wants all state cities and towns to be on LED streetlights by 2018. A necessary step for Westport would be to purchase the presently leased streetlights. The estimated cost would be \$1.00 to \$1.50 per streetlight of which there are around 200. Then there will be the cost of the LED bulbs and the cost of taking down and replacing the present lights.

Mr. Connors presented for discussion a recommendation by the Committee of Green Communities to the Selectmen. More specifically, would the Selectmen be open to a presentation by Seth Pickering, Southeast Regional Coordinator for the Green Community Division of Energy and Environmental Affairs of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This program is certainly worth serious consideration as individual grants for energy saving projects for municipalities can be as high as 250,000 dollars. Mr. Sullivan thought we should do some more homework before making a formal recommendation to the Board of Selectmen. What kinds of projects are towns receiving grants for? Mr. Barnes volunteered to research this. In addition, he noted that utility companies provide energy audits with recommendations to towns free of charge. Mr. Sullivan will instruct the Town Administrator, Tim King, to communicate with Eversource regarding this service and Mr. Sullivan will report back to the Committee regarding the results.

The next topic on the agenda was about new solar projects in town. Chairman Connors reported there were a total of four. Two are off Old County Road, one is in the Blossom Road area, and the fourth off Route 177. The SREC II program has been completed and the SREC III program will soon be announced by the state. The incentives will be less than SREC II, but it will be in force for fifteen years. Developers are pleased with the certainty of the program. Mr. Sullivan indicated that these projects would be financially beneficial to the town. For one, there would be a personal property tax on the equipment.

This would decrease over time. However, there would also be a PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) which would increase over time.

Mr. Connors noted that landfill solar project is still open, but the town is waiting for the announcement of SREC III. This project will offer less of a return than the private solar farms just mentioned. Still on the drawing board is the development of solar farms on town-owned property. The Chairman asked for a volunteer to assist him in coming up with a list of the most promising sites so they could be further evaluated by Power Management. Mr. Brewer volunteered to do so.

The proposed next meeting date is 11/21/16.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:09PM.

Respectfully submitted by Walter Barnes