

8/29/16 Westport Energy Committee Meeting Minutes

The Monday 8/29/16 meeting of the Energy Committee in the Selectmen's Conference Room was called to order by Chairman Tony Connors at approximately 7:04 PM. Other members present were Max Kohlenberg, Walter Barnes, and new members, Richard Brewer and Buzz Brownlee. Absent were Karl Daxland and Michael Sullivan.

Chairman Connors introduced the new members: Richard Brewer, a member of the Finance Committee, and Buzz Brownlee.

The minutes of the 7/18/16 meeting were approved as written.

Chairman Connors introduced Mr. Seth Pickering, Southeast Regional Coordinator for the Green Communities Division of Energy and Environmental Affairs of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to give a presentation on Green Communities.

Mr. Pickering said information on Green Communities is available on line. The web site is Green Communities/Mass.Gov. He went on to say the program took effect in 2009 and grants began in 2010. As of now, 155 towns and cities out of a total of 351 in the Commonwealth have applied for and been designated as Green Communities. Around 60 million dollars in grants have been issued to these towns and cities to date.

He went on to say that there are two main factors that have made the Green Communities program successful. One is a good delivery of services. The other is strong funding. *Funding for the grants is available through proceeds from carbon allowance auctions under the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and Alternate Compliance payments paid by retail electric suppliers that do not meet their Renewable Portfolio Standard compliance obligations through the purchase of Renewable Energy Certificates. The Green Communities Grant Program can provide a total of up to \$10 million annually to qualified cities and towns. Initial grants are based on a \$125,000 base for each designated Green Community.

*There are five criteria necessary to be designated a Green Community.

- . Provide as-of-right siting in designated locations for renewable/alternative energy generation, research and development or manufacturing facilities;
- . Adopt an expedited application and permit process for as-of-right energy facilities;
- . Establish an energy use baseline and develop a plan to reduce energy use by 20 percent within 5 years;
- . Purchase only fuel-efficient vehicles for municipal use.
- . Require new construction to reduce lifecycle energy costs (i.e. adoption of an energy-saving building "stretch code").

Mr. Pickering explained that criterion 1 and 5 would require a vote at Town Meeting. Vehicles such as police vehicles and department of public works vehicles are exempt from criterion 4. He noted that Bristol County towns and cities have been slow to sign up for Green Communities. The main sticking point has been the "Stretch Code." Although the "Stretch Code" will add a small amount to the cost of a new home, compliance will result in an estimated 15 to 20% more energy efficiency with lower energy costs over the life of the home. Furthermore, the base building codes are being elevated by the state and may in a short time be basically the same as the "Stretch Code."

The regional coordinator pointed out that grant money could be used for LED lighting. Furthermore, the state will soon offer financial assistance for LED street lighting and this program will be separate from Green Communities. Governor Baker wants all street lighting to be LED by 2018.

In closing, Mr. Pickering said he would be happy to have an informational meeting with the Board of Selectmen.

Chairman Connors then opened a discussion on the next agenda item which was an update on the SRPEDD electricity aggregation program. Westport joined with 30 other communities to purchase electricity from Con Ed Solutions at an aggregation 24 month rate of 0.0949/kWh starting in January 2016. For the period January 1, 2016 through June 30, 2016, this resulted in a savings of 0.0131/kWh. However, Eversource lowered their rate for the summer of 2016 to 0.08208/kWh and now there are high, middle, and low projections for the Winter of 2017 and the Summer of 2017. The only projections that will be lower than the Con Ed Solutions are the low projections in 2017. In other words, the Con Ed Solutions aggregation program rate will be lower if the high or middle projections are charged by Eversource. Mr. Brewer has heard from people in town who say they do not understand the program. Mr. Connors plans on contacting SRPEDD for further information.

The next agenda item was an update on the landfill solar project. Chairman Connors says this is still in limbo because the state still has not released the SREC III regulations. As solar farms evolve in the state, utilities now have incentives to develop solar farms on their own. It could turn out that Eversource may have an interest in developing a solar farm on the town landfill.

Mr. Connors reported that Tim King, Town Administrator, has straightened out schedule Z so that the town is now up to date in receiving the proper amount of solar credits from Eversource.

Regarding the electric vehicle program, Mr. Connors said the vehicle could be purchased at the end of the program. It would be nice if there was an easy way for the town to incentivize greater use of the electric car.

The final agenda item brought up by Chairman Connors was the improvement of the Energy Committee website. He asked for volunteers to help in this task. Mr. Brownlee and Mr. Barnes agreed to do so. These three members will have a meeting on the website before the next meeting of the Committee and will report back to the Energy Committee. They will be conferring with Diane Pelland of the Selectmen's Office in the meantime.

The proposed next meeting date is 9/26/16.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Walter Barnes

*Energy and Environmental Affairs bulletin of 12/22/15. Baker-Polito Administration Designates 19 Cities and Towns as New Green Communities, Page Two.