

5/21/18 Westport Energy Committee Meeting Minutes

The Monday 5/21/18 meeting of the Energy Committee was called to order by Chairman Tony Connors at 7:05 PM. Other members present were Karl Daxland, Max Kohlenberg, Buzz Brownlee, Dick Brewer and Walter Barnes. Absent was Rick Malis.

The minutes of the 12/4/17 meeting were approved as written.

The first topic of discussion initiated by Chairman Connors was Green Communities. The Stretch Code was passed at the Annual Town Meeting. This was the only one of the five criteria for Green Communities which required Town Meeting approval. Now there are really no obstacles for applying to become a Green Community. We will have to start thinking of projects for grant applications. A review of the five criteria might be helpful in this regard. The goal is to reduce energy use by the Town 20% over a five-year period. Data collection of energy use by the Town will also be helpful. The committee might seek what grants other communities have received. An upgrade in the air conditioning at Town Hall is certainly one priority.

Seth Pickering, Westport's Green Communities coordinator, has communicated with both Chairman Connors and Tim King, Town Administrator. The application to become a Green Community is made over the internet. The Town has the option to have Seth Pickering review the application first before submitting it. The Town should submit the application by mid-October to be eligible for grant money next year. Incidentally one of the grants towns have taken advantage of is hiring an energy manager.

Chairman Connors announced that Mr. Brownlee is now on the Building Committee for Schools representing the Energy Committee. Mr. Brownlee reported that the Building Committee holds workshops and seeks input from those in attendance. Also, Green Communities does not provide any grants for the new school.

The Chairman then began a discussion of LED streetlights. The Town has hired the services of Tanko Lighting to be paid for by the LED grant from the state. Westport is to purchase the present streetlights from Eversource and National Grid. Tanko is evaluating 3 firms from which the Town can purchase the LED lights. Tim King has suggested LED street lamps be visited in other towns to help decide what is best for Westport. One member suggested we consider if any additional streetlights may be needed or where there are areas presently served that don't need streetlights. The chief of police might be one person to contact to determine if there is a need for any additional streetlights. There are presently around 200 active streetlights. If there is any money left over from the \$60,000 allocated by the Town for the program, it will go into free cash.

The next item on the agenda was the community electricity aggregation program. Members are presently on a 3-year cycle which started in January of this year. The locked in rate for supply services is 10.122 cents/kWh compared to an Eversource supply services rate of 11.403/kWh for July 2018 – December 2018. Interesting to note is that Attorney General Healy's office has been investigating bad energy practices by alternate energy providers. This of course does not include the aggregation program. It is unlikely that many people have opted out of this program.

Chairman Connors noted that Town Meeting approved funding for the electric vehicle program. This program is no longer covered by a dedicated state grant. The decision has been made to purchase the present electric vehicle which was leased under the state grant. The Committee continues to consider ways to incentivize use of this car. The Town has been saving around \$200 a month. The continued use of an electric vehicle supports the Town's Green Community application. The Green Communities awards grants for additional low mileage vehicles including hybrids.

The Chairman then turned to an update for solar on town land including the capped landfill. Particularly appealing to developers are sites close to 3 phase electric lines and substations. There are presently two companies interested in the capped landfill. This has already been approved for solar by the Town Meeting. The subcommittee has come up with 2 other town sites which might be suitable for solar development. One is on Drift Road south of Fallon Drive and the other is behind the present high school. However, the former is used for brush disposal by the highway department and

the latter has wetland issues. Also, there may be plans for a ball field. Therefore, the availability of either site remains to be determined. The capped landfill would accommodate only a small solar project, so a developer might be more interested if he had a second town site. Regarding the capped landfill, the Committee might invite at least one of the interested developers to make a presentation.

Mr. Barnes then branched off about whether the best deal for the town was the PILOT program or a property tax. He had heard unofficially that the town of Dartmouth, which uses the property tax method, was presently receiving \$40,000 per megawatt whereas Westport was receiving \$10,000 per megawatt. Of course, the property tax decreases with time whereas the PILOT program increases due to no change in the base rate and an annual escalator clause. Apparently, the party who comes out the best is the one who guesses right on inflation. In any case, something worth keeping an eye on for contracts in the future.

Mr. Barnes then mentioned how property owners in south Westport have engaged him regarding their concerns for proposed industrial solar projects in residential neighborhoods. There were 2 projects that involved considerable clear cutting. There was talk of the Energy Committee assisting the Planning Board in drafting a solar bylaw several years ago. Now that we know so much more about commercial solar farms, it might be time to revisit the solar bylaw to determine if any changes are in order. The Energy Committee might aid in this process if invited to do so. Mr. Barnes will be attending future Planning Board Hearings and report back to the Committee.

In the new business category, there was discussion about Borrego and the new police station. The Town is auditing the Borrego account and all is going well. However, it could be that between the new school and the police station, the Town will be using more electricity than they receive credits for. The chief of police has expressed an interest in rooftop solar for the police station. It is anticipated that the new police station will use double the electricity the old one did. It will be important to know the roof area and how much electricity can be generated.

Mr. Brownlee inquired of the Chairman how the Green Communities program could be presented on the website. Chairman Connors indicated that a brief description of Green Communities would be in order. Also, mention of the kinds of projects which would be eligible for grants. Also, the Town including the Committee, are working with the regional coordinator to meet all the criteria, gather data, and come up with projects to apply for grants.

Chairman Connors announced that the next meeting would be scheduled for July.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:16PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Walter Barnes

