

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE SUSTAINABLE ENERGY COMMISSION

11-20-2014

The Sustainable Energy Commission held a regular meeting Thursday, November 20, 2014 in shared meeting room 3 of the Municipal Center located at 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT 06470.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Kathy Quinn at 7:00 pm.

Present: Chairman, Kathy Quinn, Mark Sievel, Joseph Borst, Charlie Copp, Desiree Galassi, Dave Stout, Fred Hurley, Barbara Toomey

Absent: James Gulalo

Communications:

Ms. Quinn was having a discussion with a former member about the new ambulance garage and how there were no solar panels or LED lights on the structure. The Commission discussed this and feels that there should be recommendations written into the building code for municipal buildings to include LED lights and / or solar panels if possible.

Mr. Sievel made a motion to recommend to the Building & Site Committee that as a part of their standard operating procedure they should investigate all options for sustainable energy for a municipal building and / or structure. Mr. Stout seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Ms. Quinn shared that Bryan Dougherty is the newest member of the Commission. He currently works at Sikorsky as a Deputy Program Manager.

Ms. Quinn also read in the *Newtown Bee* that the Dodgingtown Fire Department recently used the CL&P small business plan to install LED lights.

Public Comments:

Mr. Kurt Anderson, Senior Vice President, from Solomon Energy attended the meeting. Solomon Energy mainly works in the local tri-state area doing commercial, residential, and municipal energy work. Ms. Quinn invited him to the meeting to speak about large scale solar projects.

Mr. Anderson spoke about the benefits of solar energy which include:

- Reducing electric expenses by 10% to 25%
- Can provide revenue stream to lessen the cost of the project (ZREC - zero emission renewable energy credit program)
- Take advantage of tax benefits to lessen project costs
- Achieve sustainability goals

Mr. Anderson also discussed the challenges with solar energy which include:

- Possible drain on current resources due to RFP (request for proposal) process
- PPAs (power purchase agreement) can be very one – sided in favor of the developer
- Utility interconnection process can be very complicated
- Complexity of financing models available

Mr. Anderson also discusses power purchase agreements (PPAs) which are long-term agreements, usually 15 – 25 years, that are between Newtown and a third party entity. The PPA provider handles all of aspects of the system including the rights to the site, the financing, the developing, building, operating, and maintaining the system during the agreement. One benefit of a PPA is there is no initial capital or loans needed upfront from Newtown and the provider is only being paid on the production of the system.

The last topic Mr. Anderson discussed was virtual net metering. Virtual net metering allows the customer, Newtown, to assign the energy credits from a solar system to another metered account. The benefit of this for Newtown is that it doesn't obstruct open spaces, it can provide significant savings, and allow municipal facilities that are no ideal for solar reap the benefits of solar energy production.

Solomon Energy has a two phase approach to energy solutions. The first phase they research energy usage and make recommendations for improvements and changes that can be made then and agreement is signed between Solomon and their client. This agreement states that if the client makes any of the changes or recommendations outlined in Solomon's report they must be done through Solomon. The second phase is when the agreement is carried out. Solomon builds their fee into the price of the projects completed. There are not costs until the project has been completed.

Solomon Energy's employees have a broad market knowledge in the energy industry. Newtown has the potential for virtual net metering and Solomon has a developer who has a site earmarked for virtual net metering already that can be assigned to Newtown.

Mr. Hurley discussed two possible sites Newtown already has for virtual net metering, the Reed School and the former landfill. The town is working on creating RFPs now for these sites. Mr. Anderson stated that Solomon can assist Newtown in navigating the RFP process.

Mr. Hurley also informed the committee that they have started the process for a land use permit for the landfill to remove obstacles for the project. He also discussed the Bachelder property and informed the commission that the site won't likely be ready in the next year for a system as the site still needs to be cleared. He hopes to have the site cleared before the ZREC program ends.

There is also attractive financing for solar available through the green bank but so far PPAs have worked well for Newtown with little to no risk for the town.

Ms. Quinn stated she would keep Mr. Anderson informed on RFP process but they more than likely won't be release until the end of December.

Acceptance of Minutes:

Mr. Sievel made a motion to accept the minutes of the October 16, 2014 meeting minutes as presented. Mr. Borst seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Old Business:

Mr. Borst made a motion to correct the date on the Meeting Agenda to November 20, 2014. Ms. Toomey seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Budget / Grants – Park Lighting

The proposal is the in the works for the installation of LED lights in Dickinson, Liberty, and Treadwell park. This initiative will meet the night sky initiative.

There are still funds in the budget, Ms. Quinn asked the Commission to think about other projects where some of these funds can be used. One possibility is for school outreach.

Energy Savings Programs

Residential / Post Solarize CT Programs

The post Solarize CT program will be launched at the end of January with an information session at the library.

Commercial

The CPACE, commercial property assessed clean energy, presentation occurred on October 28, 2014. This program was directed at business owners and there was low attendance. This may be a program that will need personal reach outs to individual business owners. The word about CPACE will spread as more businesses get involved and word spreads through the media.

Next Solar Projects

Mr. Hurley has started the RFPs for the projects. These will be virtually identical to the previously issued RFPs except the description of the project is changing.

Mr. Hurley spoke about the potential project at the landfill. This project will most likely bring in fill for the upper portion to create a tabletop effect which will help avoid reflection at the

community across the river from the potential solar system. Mr. Hurley is also waiting on CL&P to confirm how to get the power from the system to the grid.

Energy Savings Performance Project – IGA Status

Ameresco has completed their work and any additional services from them will not be needed in the future.

The audit indicated that of the projects recommended, the cost and the value of the project were out of line. When this audit was started there were reasons that exist today that didn't exist then against doing these projects. The first is that the interest rate offered in the project proposal can be obtained by the town on their own, more options are on the market now than were offered in the proposal, and Ameresco wouldn't budge on certain technologies included in the proposal even though new technologies had been released that made more sense and were more efficient and appropriate for the schools like dimmable LEDs.

Mr. Stout worked with CL&P and got the electricity counts and each building can use the municipal rate at 0% up to \$200,000 with a 50% rebate on the electric bill to install LEDs and the cost would be paid on the electric bills. This can be done through the small business energy advantage program (SBEA). Each municipal building would fall under the SBEA program but they can be aggregated together. Mr. Stout suggested packaging four buildings together at first to start with. Mr. Hurley suggested starting with a school and for Ms. Stout to go to the Board of Education business office for assistance. Mr. Hurley suggested the Middle Gate Elementary School may be a good starting point for the SBEA program. Mr. Stout is currently an auditor for the SBEA program and said he would be willing to put together a four building package to see if it makes sense to move forward. Mr. Stout will call Geno Faiella to see which education building makes sense to start with.

Transition Movement

No update.

Municipal Energy Plan

No update

Energy Star Portfolio Manager

No update

Outreach to Schools

Ms. Quinn recommended getting in touch Dr. Erardi, the Newtown Superintendent, to talk about how the Commission can get more involved in the schools and get the students involved in sustainable energy initiatives.

Ms. Toomey also mentioned that the Energy Club at Newtown High School would like to get more involved. Mr. Hurley shared that the Energy Club will be picking up cans and bottles at the transfer station for the redemptions. They are hoping to get other clubs involved as well.

Adjournment:

Mr. Borst made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 pm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Galassi. The motion was carried unanimously.

The next regular meeting will occur on Thursday, December 18, 2014 at 7:00 pm at the Newtown Municipal Center in Shared Meeting Room 3.

Submitted, Jessica Smith, clerk.