

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE SUSTAINABLE ENERGY COMMISSION

5-21-2015

The Sustainable Energy Commission held a regular meeting Thursday, May 21, 2015 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 7:03 pm.

Present: Chairman, Kathy Quinn, Fred Hurley, Joseph Borst, Dave Stout, Steven Gogliettino

Absent: Desiree Galassi, Bryan Dougherty, Mark Sievel, Barbara Toomey

Public: Keith Alexander, Board of Education

Communications:

Welcome to Steve Gogliettino, the newest Sustainable Energy Commission member.

Ms. Quinn reported that 9 mattresses were collected at Earth Day, the goal was 10.

There is a stand up collage board of Sustainable Energy Commission projects in Town Hall. Ms. Quinn invites all members to stop by and take a look. The board was also used at Earth Day and is easy to move around between locations and events.

Ms. Quinn was asked to meet with Direct Energy who is attempting to set up another Solarize program. The Commission does not want to commit to working with just one vendor for any future programs or projects. The Town of Fairfield just started a second round and has more interest than the first. Fairfield is working with 2 vendors for this round.

Public Comments:

None

Acceptance of Minutes:

Mr. Borst made a motion to accept the minutes of the April 16, 2015 meeting minutes as presented. Ms. Quinn seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Old Business:

Solar Project: RFP (Request for Proposal) for Landfill

Mr. Hurley reported that 11 companies attended the pre-bid meeting and 5 of those companies submitted bids.

One critical issue that is currently being decided at the state level is if there will be any more spaces opened up for towns in the virtual net metering program before the legislature adjourns in June. Currently all the queue for municipalities is full for participation in virtual net metering. One other date that is important for this project is June 18, 2015 which is when the ZREC (zero emission renewable credit) program ends.

The final number for the project will depend on the ZREC auction in June. Only one bid is supposed to be entered per site. Mr. Stout believes the bidding will be around \$48. Some bidders for the RFP did not include the ZREC amount. The Virtual Net Metering credit is on a sliding scale depending on the cost of power.

There has been some discussion on the Eversource interconnection fee. Some believe it could be as high as \$400,000 or \$500,000. The more common number is believed to be \$100,000. Four of the five bidders believe the fee will be \$100,000.

The top two vendors have a generation shortfall reimbursement for 90%. This is important because a shortfall in generation could cause an issue with budgeting for power costs.

There are no obvious red flags on equipment but the vendors did not list all equipment that would be used for the project.

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Mr. Borst questioned if the state variable rates will have any impact on this project. Mr. Hurley stated that the variable rates will not have any impact on this project but are more relevant to residential consumers.

Mr. Gogliettino asked how long the project would take to implement. Mr. Hurley stated that latest date to come online is October 1, 2016 with the ZREC program. All the vendors are aware of the come online date and that they need to meet the deadline or they could face financial jeopardy. The vendor chosen will need to make payments to the state at different milestones in the project. There is no financial obligation to the town on a PPA (power purchase agreement). The ZRECs won't be awarded until July and they are awarded from the lowest to the highest bids.

The cost of electricity is projected to increase 10.9% over the next 20 years. If Newtown is able to lock in a solar rate that will remain constant while the cost of electricity is rising, the savings rate will steadily increase as well. The system will lose 0.5% of generation each year and eventually level out around 80%.

The vendor will be responsible for maintenance and the cleaning of the panels in the event of snow.

At the end of the contract, the town will have several options that will be outlined in the contract itself. Newtown will be able to buy the system at the current rate, extend the contract, or use the removal clause.

Solar City Proposal

Solar City had the best price per kilowatt with no escalator. The available kilowatt hours would only require a system of less than 744 kilowatt AC. Newtown can choose to add more buildings to the project to get to the project proposal of a 1 megawatt system. They identified the VNM (virtual net metering) credit, interconnection fee, reimbursement, identified current bill needs, and listed equipment on the proposal. The longest warranty on the panels is about 25 years, the proposal outlined various term years, starting at 15 years. This project is a sweet spot for Solar City, it will be a great investment for both the town and the vendor.

Sun Edison Proposal

Recognized buildings that don't require a 1 megawatt system. No interconnection fee is listed but is most likely rolled into the cost.

The Solar City proposal is quite lower than Sun Edison. It is difficult to make an apples to apples comparison between the bids

PV Navigator Proposal

Proposal was very general with a 1% escalator. There wasn't much information and can assume some costs are rolled into the proposal but can't know for certain. There was no ZREC number in the bid.

Altus Proposal

Their proposal is higher than it has been in the past for other projects. Mr. Hurley was surprised at the mention of the local tax abatement and that it didn't discuss VNM savings. They assumed the ZREC but didn't mention it and the escalators are high.

Solomon Proposal

Their proposal wasn't terrible and they understand the legal complexities with VNM and the legalities that need to be passed for it to happen. They are partnering with True Green Capital Management and have a couple landfill projects in the queue for completion. They talk about the offset from the standard rate of utility which isn't too great. The floors are usually around .065 and Solomon's is .08. Their unit rates are high as well.

Solar City has a good track record for nailing down these projects. The landfill is settled completely and won't have any surprises.

Motion: Mr. Borst made a motion to recommend that the town of Newtown's Purchasing Authority begin negotiations with Solar City and accept their bid for the solar project at the landfill. Mr. Gogliettino seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Outreach to Schools

The commission is trying to get the schools and kids more involved in programs like recycling but they're having a hard time getting the Newtown Public Schools on board unlike the private schools in town that are already participating in sustainable programs. One program the schools can get involved in is through Terracycle which collects unusual items and upcycles them and pays the schools for the items they collect like chip bags or juice pouches.

Public Works is also having a difficult time getting recycling going in schools. There needs to be some priority given to it in schools and each building needs to get on board. Solid Waste conducts poster contests each year and Newtown has hardly any entries. Public Works has found it very frustrating not being able to get any traction in the schools. The kids are into the different programs and ideas but they aren't being supported in the schools. The Board of Education needs to give its support to the Superintendent who needs to filter this down to the schools.

The schools and students will have access to the energy dashboard where they will be able to look up each building's power usage.

Mr. Alexander likes the ideas in general but wants to know what can specifically be done to move forward. One thing he does suggest is having all communications go through the central office. Public Works has tried sending the communication to each school in the past but it never trickles down to the teachers.

Significant savings can be had with a solid, effective recycling program. Recycling costs are lower than waste costs. Mr. Hurley can assist in calculating the savings that could be obtained. There also need to be more recycling receptacles in the schools. The priority needs to come from the top down to put some energy into sustainable programs in the schools.

Public Works is looking at different school buildings to incorporate some of the ESCO findings like LEDs and rooftop solar. The focus will be on buildings whose future use is definitive.

Energy Savings Program

Ms. Quinn pulled summary information from final IGA from Ameresco which broke down each building's current status along with energy conversion measures that were recommended which excluded LEDs.

The baseline for energy usage will be from the 2012 fiscal year. The ESCO is based on the 2013 fiscal year.

Natural gas is possible at the middle school. Edmond Town Hall is proceeding with a boiler replacement.

As an alternative to Celtic, Newtown can also use a SBA (small business advantage) approved vendor. The question facing the commission is if they feel a third party is needed to oversee the projects.

Many of the IGA finds can go through the SBA program. The SBA vendors are all required to justify their costs to Eversource. Mr. Hurley recommends getting an RFP going to get an estimate from Celtic and others for consulting on the SBA projects. The town could start with one small project and getting and see how it goes before committing to having consultants on the other projects. The third party would take care of the administrative tasks, follow ups, and pick up the slack where necessary.

Street Lighting

Mr. Hurley has to call CCM and look at more proposals and the different options that are available.

Municipal Energy Plan In process

Energy Star Portfolio Manager In process

Transition Movement No update.

Term Limits

Ms. Quinn and Mr. Borst's terms expire in January 2016 and can't be renewed because of term limits.

The Sustainable Energy Commission is not really a political commission but is more forward thinking and project based. It is important to keep people working for the benefit of town.

Motion: Mr. Borst made a motion to recommend to the Charter Commission that since the Sustainable Energy Commission is a non political board, there does not seem to be a need for the restriction of terms of service. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gogliettino. The motion was carried unanimously.

Adjournment:

Mr. Borst made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. Stout. The motion was carried unanimously.

The next regular meeting will occur on Thursday, June 18, 2015 at 7:00 pm at the Newtown Municipal Center in Shared Meeting Room 3.

Submitted, Jessica Smith, clerk.