

TOWN OF WINDHAM
ENERGY COMMISSION
MINUTES
Monday January 12, 2015

Call to Order: the meeting was called to order at 6:08 pm. *Commission members* in attendance were: Jean de Smet- Chair, Grace Adams, Alex Girshick, Liz Ostwald, and Corey Krohn (arrived 6:13PM). *Also present:* Tom Markland - interested citizen, and James Finger –staff

Citizens and Delegations: none

Minutes - Liz Ostwald made a motion to approve the minutes of October 27th, and November 3, 2014, and Alex Girshick seconded the motion; all voted in favor.

TOPICS

- *Clean Energy Community Municipal Action Plan*
- *Discussion of the role of the EC in decision-making re: spending grants and awards; advising on energy efficiency; conservation; and renewable energy in Windham.*
- *Request to Town Council for FY 15-16 budget. Recommendations for Council Action*
- *Status report on expenditures for Community Innovations Grant Program*
- *Opportunity to purchase street lights*
- *Micro-grid report*

Clean Energy Community Municipal Action Plan

The Chair reviewed the Municipal Action Plan and the Commission's role in advocating that the Town complete the plan, and the Commission could then use it to monitor the Town's progress in meeting its goals. Some discussion ensued, and mention made of ECSU's Institute for Sustainable Energy who is willing to train Town Staff on how to use the Portfolio Manager program.

The Commission will need to ask the Town Council to make this a priority, and put money aside to hire a consultant to do the benchmarking. Implementing the plan should be assigned to staff, and the Commission would continue to advise with its recommendations on priorities; but the Commission does not have the power to direct anyone to do anything.

The man assigned to work with us at Eastern (ECSU) told Mellissa Everett that they (Institute for Sustainable Energy at ECSU) are very busy, and at most could only provide training for the Town to complete the Town's benchmarking.

The Chair explained that the advantage of using the Plan, is that it gives you charts and measurements on where you are, or what you need to fix; especially if one of our building's energy is going up in usage, and how do we account for it.

Next discussion ensued as to the role of the Energy Commission in decision-making regarding spending grants and awards, advising on energy efficiency, conservation, and renewable energy in Windham. The Chair said it's been made clear to her that the Commission's role is limited, and is simply on advisory at this time. The Commission does not have specific authority to tell the Town

what to do or on spending any grant funds. Some discussion arose on how the Town identifies priorities for improvements. James answered that for the most part, the Town Engineer is working off of the recommendations in the original energy audits, and/or complaints from various departments on the need for energy improvements because of equipment failure.

Alex Girshick asked about the commitment the Town made in reducing its energy consumption; what happens if the Town doesn't live up to the agreement. General comments were that nothing happens, and James clarified that the Town wouldn't qualify for the Bright Idea grants from CL&P. These could be up to \$20,000 per year, and the Commission members felt this was important.

Liz Ostwald opined that we should hire a consultant to advise us on how to make more energy efficient improvements. The Chair agreed that it could be used to inform us and the Town on how much progress we're making and on other energy programs that could help us. She added that she appealed to the Finance Department and that they want to know how to reduce energy costs. So that when we save \$500,000 per year, we'll know that we have the money left to spend on other things.

Alex asked if this would necessitate the Town hiring someone doing this all year long. The Chair said she wasn't sure of the Town's existing staffing, and who could do this. James explained that he was assigned the responsibility of working on the Portfolio Manager. He added that he recently received an e-mail from Finance informing him of the Town's Municipal Action Plan - but it was the same document that he had sent them six months earlier. He said he's been trying to get a meeting with the Finance Department personnel on the Plan, but they've been busy implementing a new accounting software program, and now dealing with the budget.

Some discussion ensued on need to have a Municipal Facility Manager to address building needs and maintenance; similar to the School Facilities Manager. The Chair explained that on one occasion - she was at an event at the Town Hall, and the roof was leaking, and she had to figure out why - as the Town didn't have anyone responsible for care of the building. Sometimes the Town Engineer takes care of it, or the Technology Manager takes care of things. At one point, the former Personnel Director took care of building problems until he fell off of a ladder and injured himself.

The Chair explained that when they first changed out the light bulbs in Town Hall, our energy consumption actually went up - because there had been a lot of bulbs that were out. She added that there have been times when the Town borrows from other departments - like the School to have someone paint the walls in Town Hall, but we need someone in charge here.

Next the Commission talked about Z-REC's (*Zero-Emission Renewable Energy Credits* - http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2715&q=553942&deepNav_GID=1626 & https://www.cl-p.com/Home/SaveEnergy/GoingGreen/Renewable_Energy_Credits/).

Corey said that the use of Z-REC's is how Hampton was able to install solar panels on its municipal buildings. Alex wondered if the Town had anything like this for its municipal buildings. Jean thought that the Town Engineer might handle this as he routinely puts out RFP's. James said he wasn't sure that Joe would handle this type of thing, as he's seen these types of requests come from Attorneys like Murtha & Culina. He added that maybe the Water Department has done a Z-REC for their solar panels.

The Chair agreed that we probably need to put out an RFP to hire a consultant to look at the entire Town to look for sites that would have the potential for solar... Alex asked about the Micro-grid, and all agreed that this type of project would probably qualify. The Energy Commission could make the recommendation to the Town Council to proceed on this. More discussion ensued.

The Commission discussed the need to have a budget, and making a request to Town Council for FY 15-16 budget. The Chair referred the Commission to the Energy Commission annual report that she sent to the Town Council starting on the second page at the bottom that identified that we should budget \$65,000 for a consultant, and maybe another \$20,000 for grants.

The consensus was that the Town should set aside funds to hire a consultant to advise on the priority for spending the money allocated in the annual expenditures that the Town uses to upgrade its equipment. The Commission agreed that it wants to support keeping funding for next year's budget so the Town can continue to make capital improvements for energy efficiency that the Town Engineer has been working on for the past five years. The Commission would like to be involved in the review of projects, so that it could make recommendations to support the projects, and so it can inform the community about the Town's progress on its energy efficiency goals.

Corey commented that he's not interested in whether the Town installs new HVAC controls in the Public Safety Complex. He's interested in looking at sites that could be used for solar farms and in helping residents save money on energy.

Status report on expenditures for Community Innovations Grant Program - James updated the Commission on the expenditures to date, and that he's still waiting for Love & Pop to submit their financial information so that he can pay her. Pat Bresnahan is waiting for the Commission to identify items to put on the Energy Commission's web site. Also, James said he's looking to buy the Kill-a-watt meters, but is having trouble finding a local store where he can buy them, as he cannot purchase them on-line - yet.

Web site development

Discussion also ensued as to the effects of the recent electric rate hikes that have gone into effect, and the need to inform the public about options for selecting an electric supplier. Liz commented that she recently saw a web site that listed all the various suppliers with a variety of rates and terms, and that it was overwhelming to look at all the choices. The Chair explained that you can narrow down the list to a more manageable level by orienting the list by price and terms. Many complained that a lot of the suppliers have 'teaser' rates of three to six months - or some other odd number of months. Further discussion ensued on what else to put on the web site - including links possibly to <http://www.energizect.com>.

Opportunity to purchase Street Lights - The Chair mentioned that we received an offer from Tanko Lighting to give us a proposal on taking over our street lights, but no one from the Town seems to want to talk with them. James explained that the Town Engineer has had bad experiences with LED lights, and so is reluctant to get any more of them. Also, the Town Manager is worried about the loss of tax revenue if we take over the Street lights from the electric company. Commission members commented that we only want to buy the light fixtures - not the poles or wires. James added that another problem is that the Town doesn't pay its street light by the amount of energy consumed - it's just a flat rate per light fixture - there are no meters - and so no incentive to save energy.

The Chair countered that the Electric Company has to give us a different rate - based on the wattage - such as High Pressure Sodium or LED; the LED's use less energy. Corey raised concern about maintenance if the lights go out, adding - how do we get CL&P to replace the ones that are out with LED's. The general consensus was that the only way to change to LED's was for the Town to own the fixtures, and hire a contractor to maintain the system. The Chair said that the State now requires that the Electric Company to allow communities to take over their Street lights, and there are several contractors that are approved to do this; Tanko is one of them.

Ideally, the Controller or Town staff should be listening to the proposal - because they have the bills and can compare costs. However, the Commission agreed that they would like to hear the presentation first, and then make a recommendation to the Town Council that they consider a presentation before them. The Chair said that the representative from Tanko will only be in Town for a few days - so he probably won't be able to make a presentation to us at a regular meeting. But, Tanko only needs a copy of our Street Light bills, and then he can give us an idea of the cost and savings to take over our Street Lights. Jean asked James to try to get this information for him.

Micro-grid report - Corey Krohn updated the Commission on the Building committee's efforts. He explained that they will have to issue a detailed request for proposals (RFP) to comply with the bidding procedures of the Grant. In addition, they are going to seek a revision to the project to change it to an AC system instead of a DC system, as no one around here would know how to maintain the DC system (typical used for submarines). Some discussion ensued on the different types of systems, and whether the State would grant an extension to complete the project, as the original contract required the project to be done by the next month. The general consensus was that the State has a lot of money allocated for the Micro-grids, and they want to see them built. The second round of funding had a poor response of only two applications for the \$15 million available; so there isn't a strong need to recover the grant funds allocated in round one to give to round two applicants.

Miscellaneous Announcements

Corey Krohn announced that there will be an energy faire in Hampton on March 4th, and he'll be there to speak.

James alerted the Commission to a proposal from Windham Solar LLC for a Solar Farm that will be developed in Lebanon - on the Windham Town line at 1 Williams Crossing Road. It's for construction of five 1.0 MW and one 1.1 MW solar photovoltaic Renewable Energy Generating facilities on a 34± acre site

Meeting was adjourned at 7:37 PM

Respectfully submitted, James Finger