

# **WINDHAM ENERGY COMMISSION**

## **Special Meeting minutes**

**Tuesday January 12, 2016 at 2:00 PM**

**Call to Order** - The meeting was called to order at 2 PM 2nd Floor Conference Room of the Town Hall at 979 Main Street Willimantic. Commission members present were Jean de Smet - Chair, Elizabeth Ostwald, Grace Adams, Richard Bloomer, and Corey Krohn. Town Engineer Joe Gardner was present to advise the Commission, James Finger was present as staff, and guests Joe Bollinger, (and Jason Tanko by phone) of Tanko Lighting.

### **Citizens and Delegations - none**

**Discussion re: LED streetlights with Joe Bollinger, Tanko Lighting** - Mr. Bollinger gave an overview of potential savings by purchasing the Town's street lighting system, and converting them to LED lighting. He cited Eversource's rate structure of Tariff 116 which is the rate that they provide versus Tariff 117 which is the rate for municipally owned system. A 170 watt High Pressure Sodium bulb (HPS) costs \$7.31 per month, where as if the Town were to acquire and convert it would cost 48 cents, and the beauty of the LED lights is that they last an average of 100,000 hours (approx. 23 & half years) - as opposed to 17,000 hours for the HPS.

You would no longer be responsible for replacing ballasts and bulbs, but you would be responsible for knock downs of the 100 poles the Town would own. But given Windham's small size, there probably wouldn't be that many poles to replace at any given time - maybe 3-4 per year, and would cost \$3,000 to \$4,000 to replace the pole - depending on the severity of the damage. Hartford has experienced around 30 to 40 knock downs. If it's just a knock down it would be the 3-4 thousand; but if it damages the footing, then there would be extra costs.

Right now, Eversource is replacing about 17% of the HPS lights every 3-5 years.

Mr. Bollinger said Tanko is in contract with eleven municipalities here in CT. Based on the inventory of lights that Eversource cited, he asserted that the Town could save an estimated 4.9 million over twenty years by owning the street lights.

Corey Krohn asked about the loss of taxes.

Joe Gardner reported that the Assessor's Office said it would only be about \$15,000 per year. However, in discussing the prospective purchase with the Town's Finance Dept., they said that the financing costs would be about \$180,000.

Mr. Bollinger repeated that the savings would be almost \$5 million over twenty years - where as if you let the Utility make the change, your flat rate per light will go up an extra fifty cents; so your only savings would come from lower electricity costs - as they would drop with LED's; which would amount to about \$1.2 million over twenty years.

Mr. Gardner argued that the savings didn't account for the acquisition costs, installation costs to include having Police on site, tax loss, bonding, or maintenance costs. He urged everyone to take a look at Norwich's street lighting system - as that is a municipal system - they own it, and they have lights that are out too. So he felt that the Town would have to budget for its own maintenance, and assign staff to perform this work.

Mr. Bollinger countered that his projection on savings did include acquisition costs (but not tax loss or bonding). Including all of the other project costs, he asserted that it would still be paid for in savings within about five years. Further, he added that they could provide maintenance for a dollar per pole per month (average of 1,500 poles X 12 months = \$18,000 per year).

Much discussion ensued.

Jason Tanko called in to answer other questions.

The Chair asked about the prospect of converting the street lights to solar.

Mr. Tanko explained that they haven't done too many of those type of conversions - mainly because of the costs which are about 3-4 times as much. He said that they've done about a dozen of these types of street lights over the past 6 years, and the costs are about \$2,500 per pole. He explained that solar lighting would work well in areas where you don't have any wires in place - like a remote area. Mr. Bollinger added that solar lights would also have to have panels for capturing solar energy, as well as batteries to store the energy for use at night and when there is insufficient light during cloudy days. You would also have to consider the lighting output and lumens per watt. He explained that a GE ERL 15 watt light produces about 127 lumens per watt = almost 2,000 lumens. The Chair asked why this wouldn't be the most advantageous for solar lighting. Mr. Bollinger agreed, but said he'd like to see that system demonstrated somewhere. So far they have not had very many customers ask for that - and Tanko just does street lights - they don't do anything else.

In returning to the topic of alternatives for the Town Street lights, Town Engineer Joe Gardner recommended that we at request that Eversource to do a trial project of installing forty LED lights to see how the public reacts to these. Much discussion ensued, but the Commission was not in favor.

The Chair asked about talking with the Town Council to urge that the Town move forward to purchase the street lights instead (the Town Engineer said it would be the Town Council's Public Works committee). Joe Gardner asked if they wanted to get the response to the enhanced audit first, and all agreed.

Mr. Bollinger said that they routinely do an audit of lights along with the examination of the inventory so they will know what they have. They collect information on thirty data points, and follow the standard RP8 Municipal lighting standard. He urged that the Town send out a request for clarification to the bidders on this item - instead of rejecting the bids.

**Citizens and Delegations** - none

**Adjournment** - the meeting adjourned at approximately 3:30 PM