

TOWN OF WINDHAM
ENERGY COMMISSION
Minutes of Monday April 28, 2014

Call to Order: The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM. Those present were: Jean de Smet - Chair, Grace Adams, Elizabeth Ostwald, Alex Girshick (6:14-7:45PM), and Corey Krohn (6:28-7:20PM). James Finger was present as staff. Guests included Paul Aresta and David Padilla of the CT Center for Advanced Technology (CCAT), and Mellissa Everett. Also present were Heather Lake of the Willimantic Chronicle, and Tom ?.

Citizens and Delegations - None

Minutes: Action on the minutes of April 14, 2014 was postponed.

TOPICS:

- Updates about Thermal Imaging numbers, tabling opportunities, Capital Improvement Plan, benchmarking status and Municipal Action Plan, Town Meeting.
- Update about the OEEB outreach initiative in Windham, with Paul Aresta and a technical Energy Outreach Specialist from CT Center for Advanced Technology.
- Discussion about Communications and Community Consensus Building with Melissa Everett from Clean Water Action.
- Plans for Mini-split workshop, Windham Journal article
- Engaging our schools

Thermal Imaging Project: Liz updated the Commission on the latest numbers of participants - and according to Sagewell/NSL - there were 255 households that inquired about Thermal Imaging, 30 HVAC inquiries, and 22 financing inquiries.

Jean then gave an update on outreach from **Erin O'Neill** the Community Outreach Program Manager at Next Step Living: OL Willard: First event was to be scheduled for April 29th, from 1-3 PM, and they would also be there on 5/3, 5/10, and 5/17 from 10AM to 2PM. Then at the Willimantic Stop and Shop on 5/8 and 5/20 from 3-7pm. Next they would go to the Savings Institute Bank where they will have a display up during the last week of April. Erin also contacted Angela Smart at Liberty Bank and she hopes to work with her on having information at the local branches in Willimantic. Unfortunately, the Credit Union declined to work with them.

Regarding the ACE/SEED program, Erin mentioned that this school program, and she would send out a PowerPoint by e-mail. Jean said she didn't think there would be enough time to do anything with the schools because of the limited time available with this program, but maybe something could be done in the fall. She reported that Erin said she thought that Tech would be great for this type of program, especially if we tied in the thermal image aspect. She also reported that Addison would be reaching out to Mackey's, but asked if we had a contact there. In addition, Erin said that she would be following up with Terri Eickel at the Inter-Religious Justice Network IREJN soon to work on the faith outreach and hope to have some good updates on this soon. Finally, she explained that she hasn't had time to contact any realtors or home inspectors, but has it on her list.

Jean said that **she** and Addison went to the Willimantic Public Library, but no one came to inquire about the program. She added that **she** and Addison have a date in May to go to the Senior Center to help people see their thermal image. There will also be a news item about this program in the Senior Newsletter.

Liz said that Tim D'Sousa at Sagewell suggested that we might want send a follow up message to those who signed up to see their Thermal Image. Both Jean and Liz said that a Solar Installer called them about installing solar panels

OEEB outreach initiative in Windham Paul Aresta and David Padilla from CT Center for Advanced Technology spoke about their work with the Office of Energy Efficient Business - which is a division of the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Mr. Aresta gave a brief overview of the program, explaining that they will map out the businesses in Town, and then have a couple of teams go door to door to meet with business owners and advise them of the various energy programs. He added that this is a free service to the businesses, and that they (CCAT) does not have any business connections with any contractors; so they are will not have any vested interest in the Business signing up for any improvements. Mr. Aresta said that they would help the Businesses energy bills to make sure they are paying the lowest rate. He added that they will also look at any proposal for work, and advise the Business if they don't think it's necessary.

Community Consensus Building Melissa Everett from Clean Water Action **spoke next about services that she would provide to the Commission... Engaging our schools**

Ms. Everett explained that she has been with Clean Water Action's Energy program since last fall, and funded by the Emily Tremaine Hall Foundation to support local energy task force organizations. She added that she is not a technical person, but can help with organizing community groups and communications as an author and a community organizer in the Hudson Valley helping communities do energy campaigns, energy challenge, and energy action plans. Windham is one of eight communities that her organization has agreed to help as long as funding continues to assist in communications and legislative policy.

She added that she had nominated the Town for the Power of Change award (for the Water Department), as well as developing a fact sheet about the micro-grid, and during flurries of activity. She applauded the Energy Commission on its drive to go after programs, but said that she didn't see a strategic communications plan or an underlying framework for getting your name out.

You do a lot, and get things in the newspaper - and that's good; but - as Jean has mentioned, you would like more people in the community to know what the Energy Commission does, and that it exists, and to enlighten more people in the community on energy programs - and what the Town has accomplished - like the micro-grid. You have a number of excellent programs - like the Business Resource outreach program which just came out (OEEB earlier in the meeting), and this is a great thing to advertise. You also have some things that are harder to sell - like the micro-grid. She said that she is here to offer assistance in getting started talking about energy achievement goals.

The Chair agreed, that the Commission has been doing so many things, that it may confuse people.

Ms Everett then distributed a hand-out with a graphic illustration to simplify the goal-strategy building exercise. This is a simplistic frame - so if you had to tell the community all the different things you wanted to tell them - distilling it into the simplest form - what would the vision, and where you want to go. She then talked about developing a vision statement and a time line. Who do you want to reach - especially in the near term or within the next six months. She then asked what is the message that the Commission would like to have the community understand better about its mission.

Grace commented that she felt our goal is to save the Town money by saving energy. Other Commission members felt that they didn't have a vision for the Commission and that they didn't know the vision of other Town Boards.

Jean commented that one of the primary frustrations is that people don't buy into these programs readily - no matter how much money it's going to save them. We've promoted a lot of programs, but people do not sign up for them. Alex - how much is this just information - or communication; it's hard to understand where we're failing on that.

Jean added that she felt it is a matter of trust. Do they trust us or the Town of Windham; and why should they trust us?

Grace added that she felt that many people are worried about the economy, and wonder whether they will still be here in another few months.

Ms. Everett - so understanding and receptivity and having the capacity to think about energy savings - or taking any kind of initiative.

Alex - maybe if they could attach it to something they can grasp - like if we can lower our energy use, we can lower your taxes; some type of tangible result - instead of we're trying to save the world - which is too big to grasp; so what do you tell them so they will care.

James commented that people don't understand what they can do to save themselves money - or energy. There needs to be some simple and practical solutions that they can have without anyone else involved in their lives. People are generally reluctant or fearful when someone comes knocking on their door and asks them if they know about all of these programs. Then there is usually some push back with the homeowner saying that they are all set or don't want someone coming into their home and telling them what to do. So there is a barricade and fear of accepting something new. There needs to be a friendly approach of no-intrusive release of information.

Tom Marcott a Member of the audience said there needs to be an example.

Ms. Everett agreed that there needs to be some examples of simple things that people can relate to. You have a high functioning group who is focused on getting the message to the specific audience you're trying to reach, but with ever new programs, it seems as if you're just climbing the same hill every time; but you don't necessarily have the buy in of the general public or the buy in of the general public with the depth that you'd like.

The Chair agreed - saying that she didn't believe that there is the trust yet. The Chronicle has given us great coverage, and we've been on the radio - and we had very good turn-out at the Town meeting (for the micro-grid) - so that was very re-affirming. More discussion ensued.

Clean Energy Communities: Benchmarking –James Finger and Wayne Donaldson will be working with the consultants on completing the Energy Portfolio Manger, and hope to get it together for the Commission soon. The Chair said she spoke with Marianne Graham at ICF, and that she will work us on the Municipal Action Plan.

Other business:

Next the Commission discussed plans for **Mini-split workshop...**

Also, we need to submit an article on Energy programs for the Windham Journal, and James agreed to work on this to meet the deadline.

With regard to tracking Windham participants, it was suggested that someone check the Neighbor to Neighbor packet (N2N CD?). Alex said he had dropped off the CD to James, and James said he downloaded the information and put it in his on-line drop box for the Commission to see.

Adjourned: The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:30 PM

Draft respectfully submitted by James Finger