

## Windham Energy Commission

### August 26, 2013 Minutes

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 6:15 PM. *Commission members* in attendance were: Jean de Smet- Chair, Grace Adams, Michael Altshul, and Liz Ostwald. Corey Krohn arrived at approximately 6:20 PM. **Also present:** James Finger –staff

**Citizens and Delegations** – none

**Accept Minutes of August 12, 2013** - Grace Adams made a motion to approve the August 12<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes, and Jean deSmet seconded the motion to approve the minutes as revised; all voted in favor to approve with two abstentions from Mike and Corey .

**Resignation of Chris Vials as Recorder** – the Chair said that Chris Vials resigned as recorder because of a heavy work load at his job. Jean said that we accept his resignation with great regret as he was very prompt in getting his minutes out to everyone.

**Nominate and Appoint new Recorder** - discussion then ensued on appointing a new recorder, and the Chair asked if the Commission had to appoint a recorder, or if the Commission could just appoint a volunteer at each meeting. James Finger agreed that the Commission could appoint a volunteer to take minutes at each meeting.

With respect to filing the minutes in the Town Clerk's Office, James mentioned that he checked the Commission's web page and found that there are several meetings where no minutes were posted. He pulled up some of those from e-mail transmission and re-formatted them to comply with the Town Clerk's requirements to ensure that only Commission members were voting, and that the motions were properly noted. He added that he had also sent the copy of the web options that were to be posted on the Commission's web page, but the information may have changed – so he asked for an updated copy for posting. Jean will take a look at the web info and missing minutes.

**Strategic Action Plan** – The Chair opened discussion on this topic. Madeline Priest- who was an organizer with Neighbor to Neighbor - helped the Commission begin formulation of this document. Long term, we want to create a net zero energy usage in Town. Michael Altshul asked for clarification of the term net zero. Jean answered that it means that we would produce enough energy to off-set any usage. This is not to mean free of the energy grid - but to off-set consumption by balancing it out with production by years end. This goal is just for the municipality and we should note that in the Plan. Some discussion ensued on trying to encourage citizens to reduce consumption; discussion also turned to conversion rates for different fuel types. This helped to refine the goal to clarify that the Commission wants to increase the use of renewable energy to reduce electrical consumption as part of the five year goal.

Another long term goal is to create a municipal utility in Windham. In order to start this, the Town should look into owning its street lights. Currently, the Town owns some in the Downtown area and at the Windham Mills along Main St. We should look at putting little solar panels on them. We probably need to hire a consultant to look at a detailed plan for establishing a municipal utility. A question arose as to other Towns who have purchased

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street light, and Jean answered that not many have. Jean thought that it would be cheaper to own the street lights over the long term. Also, since we know how much energy we consume as a community, we could probably become an aggregator and bid out the demand to try and provide a better group rate for our residents – such as in Newfane VT .

James Finger said we currently pay about \$25 each - per month for street lights, but some are covered by trees, and wouldn't have good solar access. Jean agreed that we wouldn't need to make them all solar, but we could use LED lights as they would consume less power, and they would only need limited maintenance every ten years or so. We need to find out how much it costs and what the pay back is –we did this at the Mills. She referred to an Energy Committee report that Dick Bloomer prepared that discusses this. James said we need to discuss this with Joe Gardner as he knows the most about this.

Next discussion turned to Micro-grids. Jean said the Town will be establishing one at the two adjoining schools - Sweeney School (Oakhill Dr.) and Middle School (Quarry St) – that will supply 100% of the electrical needs for the schools with solar panels and to put in a generator or a fuel cell for emergency power – as this serves as an emergency center. The energy produced can be sold back or used as a credit for the winter, so we need to learn how this fits into virtual net metering. Corey said he thought it was supposed to include a broader range of uses – like a super market, gas station, and a hospital. Jean explained that we may try to develop additional micro grids. Discussion ensued about other alternative energy production – such as turbines in water lines –which the water company could pursue: <http://www.canyonhydro.com/projects/conduit.html>

Jean added that another goal is to develop virtual net metering as the law allows trading credits for up to five sites which we could count for the Town's buildings. This could include solar panels – anywhere – such as in a large field or a parking lot – but one of the sites needs to be connected to a Town building. Alternative sites for either micro-grids or net metering may include other Town buildings – such as the High School or Natchaug School.

**Updates: Benchmarking, solar light, website, C-PACE, webinar on ZREC/net metering, Solarize**

**Benchmarking The consultants are expected to begin in October.**

**C-PACE Update** James Finger reported that the Chamber will be setting up some meetings for businesses to learn about this financing program, and that he will forward the information to the Commission when this gets finalized.

The Chair mentioned that there will be a CCM (CT Conference of Municipalities) webinar on Maximum Solar PV Savings: ZRECs and Virtual Net Metering scheduled in the Town Hall meeting room, or from members' pcs, September 5, 2013 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM  
- Topics covered will include:

- Connecticut's ZREC program

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- Municipal opportunities for behind the meter/virtual net meter projects
- Optimal project siting and sizing
- Competitive procurement of long-term Power Purchase Agreements
- Competitive procurement of Solar developers
- Advantages of the CCM Energy programs

**SBEA Toolkit** Next the Commission reviewed material from Litchfield's Energy Task force, and agreed to modify these documents for use here. More information about it is needed. We hope that this alternative can be shared at the C-PACE meetings.

Solarize- C-TEC SOLAR has been honoring the Tier 5 pricing for late signers, to date.

**Citizens and Delegations** - none

**Adjournment** – prior to adjourning, Commission members talked about the next meeting – but since several members will not be able to meet, the September 9<sup>th</sup> meeting will be cancelled; so the next regular meeting will be held on September 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6 PM.

Respectfully submitted  
James Finger - staff