

7/30/18 Westport Energy Committee Meeting Minutes – Draft

The Monday 7/30/18 meeting of the Energy Committee in the Selectmen's Conference Room was called to order by Chairman Tony Connors shortly after 7:00 pm. Other members present were Max Kohlenberg, Buzz Brownlee, Dick Brewer, Walter Barnes, and Buzz Baron. Absent were Karl Daxland and Rick Malis.

The minutes of the July 30, 2018 meeting were approved as written.

Mr. Connors announced that he was stepping down as Chairman but would continue as a member of the Energy Committee. He recommended that Walter Barnes, vice-chairman, be the next chairman. Mr. Barnes was subsequently nominated and unanimously elected as the next chairman. Buzz Brownlee was nominated to be the next secretary and was elected to that position. He will be responsible for the minutes starting with the next meeting. The Committee decided not to elect a vice chairman at this time. Mr. Barnes and the other Committee members thanked Mr. Connors for his excellent leadership and accomplishments during his tenure as chairman. One member commented that Mr. Connors had an amazing capacity to get along with others.

Chairman Connors then introduced the agenda item of Green Communities for discussion. Town Administrator King has recommended that the committee come up with some energy projects for possible DOER grants as this would be helpful in completing the application process to become a Green Community. One pathway to do so would be to arrange audits of town buildings through Eversource. This might be possible to do through Mass Save. Certainly, a leading candidate for a grant would be one or more HVAC projects. In any case, non-meeting time will have to be spent with the town administrator working on this matter.

The Chairman then turned to the issue of the LED streetlight retrofit. Town Meeting approved \$60,000 for this project in May 2018. The streetlights are to be purchased by the Town from Eversource and National Grid. Furthermore, the required audit has been conducted by Tanko Lighting. We are waiting to hear from the police chief regarding the need of any additional streetlights. An update from Mr. King is indicated before our next meeting.

The electric vehicle program was the next topic of discussion. The Town has bought and paid for the present vehicle. This certainly is not the end of low mileage vehicles for the town fleet. The Committee will be looking to the Green Communities program for further expansion. In the meantime, the Committee will continue to think of ways to persuade town employees to use town vehicles for town business as much as possible. Helpful in this process might be the use of an app for vehicle availability.

The solar farm on the capped landfill on Hixbridge Road was the next topic to discuss. Much of the information on this situation was provided by Dick Brewer. Ameresco had been given the go ahead for the project a few years back, but they apparently held back signing a contract with the Town because of the uncertainties of the incentive program by the state. However, they never withdrew from their agreement for the project and the Town never cancelled the agreement. Now that Ameresco knows the conditions of the subsidies under the new SMART (Solar MA Renewable Target) program by the state, they are ready to move ahead with the project. What needs to be done is to clarify the proposed contract between Ameresco and the Town before the next Energy Committee meeting.

The Chairman informed the Committee that Public Power is now requesting a rate increase on their three-year electricity contract with the community electricity aggregation program. Apparently, this is because the Mass Department of Public Utilities recently granted a rate increase to Eversource on the supply side. The towns and cities in the aggregation, including Westport, have objected to this and hired legal counsel. Also, Good Energy, the insurance broker for the deal, has objected as well and their legal counsel are working on the matter. In any case, if the aggregation contract is changed or dropped, there will have to be plenty of advance notice to all customers. The Committee will keep in close touch with the Town Administrator regarding this matter because he is following it closely.

Concerning new business, Mr. Barnes announced that Ameresco will have a hearing before the Planning Board regarding the Hixbridge Solar LLC. on Tuesday, August 7, 2018.

In terms of setting the date for the next meeting, Mr. Brewer felt we should have one in a month because of all the important issues in play right now. Mr. Barnes said that he will attempt to schedule the next meeting for the end of August with early September as an alternative.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Walter Barnes