

From: Susan Mazurski November 3, 2008 12:04:42 PM
Subject: Clean Energy Task Force Minutes 10/29/2008
To: SimsburyCT_EnergyMin
Cc:

Draft

CLEAN ENERGY TASK FORCE MINUTES
OCTOBER 29, 2008
REGULAR MEETING

The meeting began at 6:35 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Hall. The following members were present: Lori Fernand, Patrick Boeshans, Susan Van Kleef, and Al Weisbrich. Also in attendance was Selectman John Hampton who arrived at approximately 7:00 p.m.

1. PRESENTATION BY JASON RUPAKA, PLAINVILLE TOWN COUNCIL

Commissioner Fernand introduced Mr. Rupaka, relating his current position with the Plainville Town Council and his past experience as Chairman of Plainville's Clean Energy Task Force.

Mr. Rupaka described a bike raffle awareness promotion they developed in Plainville as an incentive for consumers to sign up for clean energy, with the bikes being funded by some of the money from the grant. He noted a similar light bulb give-away did not work nearly as well. Mr. Rupaka acknowledged similar issues Plainville faced that Simsbury currently faces with budget constraints. He described the idea of power purchasing that the Plainville Task Force endorsed where the energy companies purchase, install, and maintain the solar panels and then the municipality buys them back at a reduced cost. A separate subcommittee was set up to address the technical aspects and ultimately the power purchase was done through Opal to set up a solar system at one of the elementary schools in town. The system will ultimately become town-owned after 20 years. Mr. Rupaka confirmed for Commissioner Boeshans that this was a different program than the incentive where solar panels are earned through signing up a particular number of customers. His focus has been more on the town-owned properties.

Mr. Rupaka described a second project done on the high school roof with roll-on solar panels. There were various incentives that motivated the Town to go forward, including reimbursements from both the State and the CT Clean Energy Fund grant, as well as simply a far superior roof product. Plainville partnered with Solar Integrated out of California. The \$2 million system only cost the town about \$200,000, which was only slightly

higher than the original budget for the roof itself. Mr. Rupaka noted they have also done an additional project at the elementary school, as well as focusing on retrofitting of the lighting systems.

In response to Commissioner Fernand, Mr. Rupaka further defined the power purchase agreement. A company such as Opal agrees to purchase the system, deal with the CT Clean Energy Fund (CEF), do all the installation and maintenance as long as the town agrees that any energy that is produced will be bought from Opal at a reduced cost. Ultimately, there are no out-of-pocket expenses to the Town. Later in the meeting, Mr. Rupaka explained that Opal benefits by obtaining the CEF grant fund money as well as expanding their grid. Mr. Rupaka confirmed for Commissioner Weisbrich that the agreement has to be worked out between Opal and CT Light & Power. In addition, in the summer months when energy is being produced but not used by the school Opal gets the energy credits rather than the Town. Opal sets the price based on the energy that they produce ensuring they cover the cost of the system and yet still provide an attractive offer to the Town.

Mr. Rupaka indicated with the 3 projects currently in Plainville the Town has achieved 14% toward their goal of having 20% of electricity coming from renewable resources by 2010. The community side in town has been less successful since it is difficult to ask residents to pay more for their energy in these current economic times.

Similar to Plainville, Commissioner Boeshans suggested this Task Force also create subcommittees to focus separately on the more technical aspect of the projects and then the consumer side. Commissioner Boeshans confirmed for Mr. Rupaka that Simsbury expects to receive the grant, although the EPA Resolution and the final purchase are still in process. Later in the meeting Mr. Rupaka noted part of his encouragement for Plainville to take part in the projects was that the State grant money that enables the power purchase agreements to be economical for companies like Opal may only remain in its current structure for a limited amount of time.

Mr. Rupaka invited the Task Force members to take a tour of Plainville's school projects. Commissioner Fernand will work with him to coordinate a date and time. Mr. Rupaka is also in the process of researching a pilot program involving wind systems that actually mount on top of buildings.

Mr. Rupaka confirmed for Commissioner Boeshans that the benefit of the power purchase lies in the Town's savings on the cost of the power as well as the discounted pricing. The benefit of the town-owned solar panels is the enhanced roof system, the production of their own energy, and the 7-year pay off, leaving the remaining 13 years of the life of the panel basically free to the Town.

Selectman Hampton noted that Simsbury High School is very interested in the solar panel systems and he will keep Mr. Avery in the loop regarding the Task Force. In addition, the kids are excited about marketing the project. Mr. Rupaka noted Plainville's effort to reach the consumer side by going into the schools and joining with the environmental clubs there.

Commissioner Boeshans offered to scan and distribute via email a copy of the information Mr. Rupaka provided to the Commission on the Plainville projects. In addition, he will contact the companies listed in the materials to try to arrange a presentation at an upcoming meeting.

2. CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF TASK FORCE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Several Commissioners emphasized the different perspective that Mr. Rupaka provided in terms of focusing on the more economy-of-scale type town projects to achieve the 20% goal. The Commission agreed to put forth to the rest of the group the consideration dividing the Task Force into more scientific and marketing subgroups. The idea would be to work on both approaches simultaneously.

3. ACTION STEPS

Commissioner Boeshans presented to the group a draft resolution that would commit the Board of Selectmen to the EPA Community Energy Challenge. Selectman Hampton suggested the Task Force take steps to adopt it. He would then present it to the Town Attorney for his review and ultimately to the Board of Selectmen at their next meeting. He will also get a status report regarding Town Engineer Rich Sawitzke's progress on the purchase.

Commissioner Fernand motioned to approve and put forth to the Board of Selectmen the following draft resolution proposing support for the EPA Community Energy Challenge:

WHEREAS, the Simsbury Board of Selectman promotes conservation and the study of the use of renewable energy sources; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Selectmen has previously passed a resolution forming a Clean Energy Task Force to promote clean energy and manage the Community Innovations Grant Program;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Selectmen, with a commitment to the health of its citizens, commits the Town of Simsbury to the EPA Community Energy Challenge by committing to assess energy use, take action to improve energy efficiency, save money and seek out renewable energy choices that reduce air pollution.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Boeshans and unanimously approved.

It was agreed that additional goals and objectives for the Task Force still need to be determined by the group. Even though the grant money may not be available within the near future the group agreed to continue to move forward with ideas on how to reach the community. Commissioner Van Kleef agreed to research the Smart Power tool kit to

see what is available to begin now. The Commission and Selectman Hampton clarified details with the reporter in attendance that would be put into the Simsbury Post for the residents to begin to hear about the clean energy options. Selectman Hampton indicated Simsbury is one of 70 towns that have committed to the 20% by 2010 challenge.

Commissioner Fernand agreed to continue her discussions with the CEF contact person for information on possibly getting the grant funds earlier as well as whatever consumer materials they might provide. She also suggested contacting the existing clubs and organizations (i.e., Simsbury Land Trust, FRWA, SCTV, Keep the Woods, Community Band, Chamber of Commerce, etc.) throughout Simsbury to ask them to disseminate information (i.e., newsletter inserts, email distributions, etc.) or even to have the Commissioners come and do presentations to the various groups. The Commission agreed that prior to their next meeting each member would review the list of organizations provided by Commissioner Fernand to determine which ones would be appropriate to request their partnering with the Task Force and even which ones each member may have ties with already. The partnering may consist of donations at some point, but could also just begin with the dissemination of information about clean energy options for residents.

4. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND/OR OFFICERS

Selectman Hampton indicated he would continue to give whatever support the Task Force finds necessary but does not want to micromanage the group. The responsibilities for the Chairman then would include defining the Task Force as a separate entity, making leadership decisions, setting agendas, keeping the group focused, and seeing it through to its natural end.

Commissioner Fernand motioned to nominate Commissioner Boeshans as Chairman of the Clean Energy Task Force. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Weisbrich and unanimously approved.

5. NEXT MEETING/FUTURE MEETINGS

After agreeing Wednesdays in general are a good day for the members, the Commission agreed the next meeting would be Wednesday, November 12 at 6:30

p.m. Selectman Hampton will research meeting space and ensured that either the Main Meeting Room or some other option would be available.

Chairman Boeshans and Commissioner Fernand agreed to present regarding the resolution at the next Board of Selectmen meeting on November 10, 2008.

The Commission then discussed further options for disseminating consumer information, including the Virtual Backpack, Parent/Teacher Organizations, as well as organizing school environmental groups to get them working on the same goal and avoid duplication of efforts. Commissioner Fernand came up with the possibility of forming 'Eco-Buddies' across grades within the school. Commissioner Van Kleef offered to email the Superintendent to get a complete list of environmentally-focused groups within the schools. She will also contact Jason Rupaka in his capacity within Farmington River Watershed Association. Commissioner Fernand will work on getting her contact from Sterling Planet to present to the Task Force with regard to homeowner marketing.

Commissioner Weisbrich emphasized how many towns are coming on board with the challenge and the competition is out there for the funds.

Chairman Boeshans and Selectman Hampton will coordinate posting the agenda for the next meeting.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Weisbrich motioned to adjourn the meeting at approximately 8:00 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Van Kleef and unanimously approved.