

Newton Citizen's Commission on Energy

Minutes of Meeting of Monday, December 20, 2010, 7:30 p.m.

Meeting Room, Public Buildings Department, 52 Elliot Street, Newton Highlands, MA 02461-1605

Present: Eric Olson (Chair), Halina Brown (Vice-Chair), David Tannozzini (Newton Energy Officer), Ira Krepchin, Jonathan Kantar, Katherine Gekas, Fred Brustman, John Bliss

Chair Eric Olson called the meeting to order at 7:50 p.m.

1) Review of draft November 15, 2010 meeting minutes: The minutes were accepted with changes to items 3 (Street Lighting) – typo; 5 (Chestnut Hill Square) – change, “enforceable restrictions on”, to, “specific recommendations for”; 6 (Esco Energy Services Project) – change, “New roofs are planned for six schools”, to, “It was noted that in separate work the City is planning to replace roofs on six schools, which is also expected to reduce energy usage in those buildings”, correct spelling of name - Mullins. (7:59 p.m.)

Committee Reports

2) Renewable resources committee (Ira Krepchin, Chair)

a) Solar Facilities: there were five responses to the City's request for quotations (RFQ), Bid #11-17, for solar energy development at the Rumford Avenue dump site – Ameresco, Blue Wave-Altens, Borrego, Cadmus Group, Whose the fifth?. The respondents were interviewed on Dec. 15, 2010 by a panel consisting of Art Cabral (Public Buildings), Elaine Gentile (NDPW), Carol Bock Chafetz (School Dept.), Peter Barrer (Newton Community Farm), and George Nesops (Renewable Resources Committee). The purpose is to develop a large array of photovoltaic cells at the Rumford Avenue site and sell the power to the City. Direct connections will also be made to Newton City Hall, the Community Farm, and possibly to other community locations. One proposer offered an additional incentive of one free kilowatt-hour to the City for every five residential photovoltaic solar installations. The panel delayed further action in selecting a vendor until its January meeting.

It was noted that this RFQ had its origin in a study, which the Chair, Eric Olson, conducted with his Brandeis graduate students in 2009-2010 for the purpose of estimating the potential for renewable energy development in Newton. See the minutes for the March 15, 2010 meeting of the Commission. It was further noted that wind energy projects close to residences have encountered difficulty with apparent pressure pulses in the chest experienced by some people. This phenomenon has been observed in Troy, NY, Vinal Haven, ME, and Falmouth, MA. It was also noted that methane extraction has not proven to have sufficient economic value to justify development. (8:35 p.m.)

b) Electric Vehicle Charging Station: two locations are planned for – one in the Homer Street parking lot next to Newton City Hall and the second at the Hotel Indigo on Grove Street in Newton Lower Falls. Both would be “Level 2” stations, i.e. they would operate at 220 VAC and provide 30A of current. Level 1 is 120 VAC (? A) and Level 3 is 480 VAC (? A). The stations would be equipped with the standard plugs for each voltage. The Level 2 charger could run a domestic clothes dryer or charge a Nissan Leaf battery in five hours to run for about 100 miles. Each charging station would require \$15,000? to install.

The question was raised as to whether the Commission should learn about the life cycle costs of hybrid electric vehicles in order to evaluate the feasibility of the proposed charging stations.

3) ESCO ad-hoc committee (Jonathan Kantar, Chair)

a) Phase 2 construction and phase 3 proposed measures: clarify phase 3 report on proposed measures for building envelopes. We are waiting for a response from Mark Mullins. Phase 2 construction – building energy management systems are coming on-line. Phase 1 – Day Middle School is ready for commissioning and one year of measured energy savings which are required under the contract with Noresco to be twenty-two percent or higher.

b) Newton Lower Falls Community Center: documents are being prepared for an invitation for bids. An annual energy reduction of 50-70 percent is expected. (8:55 p.m.)

New Business

4) Report on Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Sustainable Newton (Peter Smith, Chair)

David Tannozzini distributed copy of Dec. 21 agenda and November 15 minutes:

a) Discussions with Rob Clickstein, Director Food Services, Public Schools

b) Plastic bottles/bags deposit discussions (LWVN initiative)

c) Chamber of Commerce initiatives – I missed these?? (9:08 p.m.)

Unfinished Business to be Discussed

5) Street Lighting: Reference was made to an August 3, 2010 article in the LexingtonPatch on-line newsletter about that town’s plan to convert its remaining incandescent street lights to compact fluorescent and induction lamps. It was pointed out that both types of lamp represent “old technology” compared to LED (light emitting diode) lamps, which have a long(er?) lifetime and can be controlled more easily to obtain variable illumination, but which are also more expensive to buy and install in the first place(??). (9:12 p.m.)

6) Chestnut Hill Square: No changes were reported in the status of the project, which has been approved by the Board of Aldermen.

7) Newton's 2010 Energy Action Plan/Energy and Emissions Update: there has been no response from NSTAR to our request for address-level data on energy use. However, the City has begun discussions with a consulting firm, Serrafix, to help set energy use policy for the future. Jon Kantar was invited to a recent meeting with them in City Hall. The Green Decade and Paul Eldrenkamp are provided some residential energy use data. The purpose of the exercise is to ingrain sustainable thinking into City government. One member asked if Serrafix could suggest two policies to improve residential energy saving.

Eric Olson asked members to propose new goals for the Commission's work in 2011. (My notes were cryptic on this point. Did I get it right??)

8) Commission's By-laws Updates: no action taken because Lawrence Kaufman not present. No further items were taken up for discussion, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, John Bliss, January 8, 2011