

Energy Committee Meeting
Wednesday, September 28, 2010
7 PM at Town Hall

Agenda

In Attendance: Jennifer Chiodo, Catherine Hughes, Michelle Lussier, Anne Bijur, Suzy Hodgson, David Pill, Hans Ohanian Winslow Ladue, John Owen, Charles Russell, and Gerald Boucher

Suzy Hodgson agreed to take minutes.

All Earth Renewable (AER) Proposal

Charles informed the Committee that AER has started the process of filing a Certificate of Public Good to the Department of Public Service for the 14 solar tracker installation. Suzy said that there is no lease-purchase arrangement available from Alteris, and Winslow commented that the high upfront costs of purchase would necessitate a bond so the remainder of the meeting focused on the AER proposal.

Gerald commented that the AER proposal was a good gamble given the likely electricity rate increase. Hans commented that there is a tax burden and overall societal costs to the USA, and that the AER proposal was irresponsible and could be more favorable in term of the town.

The Committee discussed the merits of the project, the importance and urgency of committing to renewables, and that the Town Plan and goals supported renewable developments. Winslow commented that having a bond vote shows voter support and that having positive cash flow was important.

The current contract from AER is with the Town's Council. Dean is looking at similar Power Purchase Agreement contracts with Starkboro and South Burlington

Hans commented that the project should share risk and profits.

Charles mentioned that there are some site concerns about visual impacts, but any application amendments could be challenging. However, the existing development of the sewage treatment plant on Thompson's Point had been mitigated by the planting of evergreens. The target date for a contract decision would be October 24.

A suggestion was made for contract additions including a removal clause if the Town decided that it didn't want to continue leasing the trackers, or a possibility of a land lease after 5 years to another lessee. It was suggested that the Town could ask to pay an upfront fee of \$100 instead of \$1000.

Charles pointed out the site location on Thompson's Point. The Committee was not involved in site selection process but rather the financial and energy implications of the proposal.

Jennifer spoke to the importance of renewables and the merits of supporting renewables in our current climate. In response to any concern that electricity rates could go down, she had asked David Blittersdorf, and he had offered an option to protect the Town from the downside risk. The Committee discussed that the upside risk of rising rates was more likely.

Hans suggested that geothermal could be a better choice because in the future heating costs will be more significant than electricity. Suzy commented that this does not help us make a recommendation or decision tonight and offered to put geothermal on the agenda for a future meeting.

The Committee agreed to support the AER proposal with Hans expressing a minority view.