

Minutes

Clean Energy Task Force

Special Meeting, Monday, October 27

Helen Keller Middle School, Media Center, 7:30 p.m.

Present: Cathy Alfandre, Heidi Armster, Carroll Brooke, Katie Callahan

Town Officials present: Adam Dunsby, Andy Kachele, Paul Lindoerfer, John Broadbin (member of parks and rec)

Cathy convened the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

**Discussion on SSES solar initiative:**

Cathy opened discussion by summarizing all that the group has done up to this point for the solar initiative. She expressed our hopes that we can come to some conclusions at this meeting and move forward with the project in the coming weeks.

Project timeline would hopefully include design and planning phase to start in the coming months over the winter and into spring, getting all the various issues resolved and project lined up, with actual construction to take place next summer (2015); goal is to have the system up and running by Fall 2015.

The question was asked about the condition of the roof and why it was no longer considered a feasible option. The TF explained that the roof condition was the primary issue, as many of the roof shingles are either not nailed or very poorly nailed in place. This is not a condition under which solar panels could be attached without replacing the roof.

Andy Kachele explained that the school board and town hopes to keep paying annually for repairs as long as that is the more financially feasible option, before fully replacing the roof.

Paul Lindoerfer asked about the cost of \$800,000 up front and how we would determine the use of this land for a project of this size.

Both Andy and Adam answered his question, saying that P&Z would have to assess the land for this use, and Andy pointed out that not all the financial plans would involve the town owning the array and in fact the TF is interested in one in which there are no up front costs.

Question raised about the issue of a third party putting equipment on town land: Carroll offered that most towns pursue PPAs (Power Purchase Agreements) and this is an option that has worked well for them, which is why we are also looking actively at this option.

Cathy added that we have to take into consideration that delays may happen due to any unforeseen issues that come up, but that we do have a timeline and some deadlines (October of next year for the production of power with the array is a critical deadline for the project).

Andy pointed out that the town is the party leasing the land, but the Board of Education is purchasing the power, and that this is another issue to consider as we plan a timeline.

Cathy asked the group if they were aware of the actual location of the land parcel in question. Carroll opened the map to show all those present exactly where the array would be built; Cathy explained the exact location and that the TF is aware of wetland setbacks and topography of the parcels in question.

The group discussed other options for parcel A, as it was brought to the TF's attention that parcel A has been discussed for possible multi-purpose athletic fields, in particular one involving artificial turf.

There was much discussion about the feasibility of moving forward on the timeline the TF has in mind for the solar initiative. If the solar system had to be moved to parcel B, leaving A for possible field use, that might begin to encroach upon the available space for expanding the array; there is also a proposal to park the school busses and construct a compressed gas fuel station in the same area.

There was a septic question also brought up that might involve parcel A. It would therefore make sense to start with parcel B; Cathy added that we could expand into A if the opportunity presented itself later on.

Given the issues with parcel A, the TF did find that B might be the only option to begin construction on for now, until more information is available on other needs.

The question was raised about the need for a transformer, where we would hook up to UI, etc. Those details are not yet fully in place, however Cathy informed all that there were no 'red flags' during walk-throughs, both on the field and in the utility room at SSES.

Cathy passed out the criteria list and explained how the TF used it to assess the 2 vendors. In summary both vendors are knowledgeable and have the required experience in solar installations. However, one of the determining factors was that ASAP had no actual (built) ground mount systems experience completed. Another issue was that the cost increase of moving from roof to ground mount was dramatically different between the 2 vendors, with the higher cost coming from the vendor with no ground mount experience as yet. That seemed to be a red flag for the Task Force.

Cathy asked for questions. Paul asked if most or all projects like this were PPAs. The TF answered that when we had reached out to municipalities for references we found they were mostly, if not all, PPAs.

Andy suggested that our timeline would not include signing the contract first. However, Cathy explained that CEFIA would in fact need a contract to move forward with initial planning stages. It was pointed out that any contract could expose the town to financial commitments, however Carroll pointed out that CEFIA has expressed that they will not hold the town responsible for initial payments should there be issues that halt the project down the line.

The discussion was mostly concerned with what the town's financial commitment would involve. But it was recognized that CEFIA would need to begin some sort of financial investment to move forward before we have enough information to proceed to a further stage.

Adam asked if we sign a contract with Bella, the recommended vendor, and Carroll replied that it would be a 3-way contract.

Adam explained the Task Force would need to seek approval from the Board of Selectmen. Next steps would involve the BoS seeking an 8-24 referral from Planning and Zoning to comply with state statutes. Adam suggested the TF present at their next meeting. They would want to see some of the economics in greater detail than what the TF has prepared for this meeting. The next meeting would be November 6<sup>th</sup>, and if we can come to that meeting and present, they can vote at that time to move with an 8-24 referral.

The question came up as to what the actual next step in the paper chain would be. Carroll added that CEFIA has an agreement they have already sent that we sign to move forward.

Katie motioned to adjourn; Carroll seconded.

Cathy adjourned the meeting at 9:10.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Heidi Armster".

Heidi Armster, Secretary  
November 20, 2014