

Conservation Advisory Commission
Thursday, June 18, 2020
Via Zoom
Minutes

Present: Skip Arthur, Vernon Benjamin, Carole Furman, Kathleen Gray, Mike Harkavy, Patti Kelly, Susan Murphy, Mary O'Donnell, Elizabeth Shafer, Leslie Surprenant, Steve Wehr, Mary Anne Wrolsen. Town Board Liaison John Schoonmaker.

I CLIMATE SMART TASK FORCE

Meeting started at 6:05pm by Mary O'Donnell, presiding.

Community Choice Aggregation (CCA)

MEGA was asked to give a presentation at this meeting but they are not adding another CCA at this time so there are only two competing administrators, Joule and Good Energy. Mary had them send their implementation plans so that we can make an educated recommendation to the Town Board. A subcommittee met to study the plans: Patti, Carole, Elizabeth and Mary. The following criteria were used to evaluate the companies: experience, quality of presentation, technical applications, work plan, project management and implementation, local impact.

Patti: Thought they both did a really good job in their presentations, ultimately she came out firmly in favor of Joule because they have a lot of hands-on experience with towns in Ulster County. She contacted those towns, and all said it is going very well, no bad news. Likes the idea of going with a company that has good experience with nearby towns, and also a relationship with Central Hudson. Good Energy's experience is not really in our area (the closest is in Greene County).

Carole: Has the same opinion. Joule's implementation plan was much clearer for someone who doesn't know much about the topic. Because Good Energy is nationwide, there's a sense of disengagement from our community in the way they wrote up their proposal. The two points that were most important to her: Engagement with the community, and getting a good rate.

Mary: On the point of communication with the community, Good Energy has the public going to the Energy Service Company (ESCO), whereas Joule has them going to not-for-profit local organizer, which eliminates a lot of staff time for the town.

Elizabeth: Felt the same as Patti and Carole; Joule's implementation plan is clearer, more geared to local interest. Likes the way Joule explains that there will be no fee for opting out. Not knowing a lot about the plan beforehand, the way Joule laid it out made a lot of sense.

Mary: On the default and opting out features, Joule's default is 100% renewable and the opt-out is standard energy (mixed sources, including fossil fuels, known as "brown" energy compared to "green" energy), whereas Good Energy offers a standard energy contract, and you can opt out for renewables. It's not our decision and not at this time, but the town will need to make that decision when putting out a contract,

Steve: What stands out for him is the local organization and local organizer's role, the role of a staff person and the role of the task force working with the administrator. He noted that Joule's presentation was lengthy and comprehensive.

Mary: Good Energy offered no local organizer; would work with someone designated by the town.

Patti: Joule offers more info than I need, and surely more than most customers could need or want. Other information may be for people who already have solar or who are with a company providing their electricity. If we are going to be the group who works with the company and interfaces with the community, we will have to have a working knowledge of all the info.

Mike: Doesn't like the idea of opting out to fossil fuel. If we're going to have a contract, why are we not offering only 100% renewable? That's what we want.

Mary: It would be the town's decision to offer only one contract, 100% renewable.

Steve: If customers want to stay with fossil fuels, they can opt out.

Mary stated that some residents may be concerned about the cost and a standard contract may offer a lower price than a 100% renewable contract. A CCA contract offers a fixed price for the period of the contract. Central Hudson price varies.

Patti: She called Central Hudson and was told that people who are with them are getting that mix already. Our grid is much cleaner than NYC, Buffalo, Orange County, etc. People who opt out of 100% renewables would get the mix, but not the fixed price.

Carole: Regarding the duties and responsibilities of the local organizer, on pages 31 and 32 Joule makes it very clear.

Patti: Whichever organization we go with, she would prefer to have the default be 100% renewable.

Steve: This effort isn't to get a better price on dirty fuel, it is to clean up the energy sources.

Mary: We will definitely recommend the default to be 100% renewable.

Vernon: Was a strong proponent of Good Energy but it's been made clear that Joule excels. It's also clear that there should be an unambiguous offer of 100% renewable. By this, the CAC makes its point and fulfills its primary function. Either company could do the job.

Skip: Joule used too many acronyms and abbreviations, but he could easily find explanations; this is important in enlisting people. Good Energy sounded like they were talking to ESCOs, not to people.

Mike: If you are dealing with a Community Solar Company already, you can keep that; this is important for him.

PROPOSAL: Mary. The Task Force recommend to the Town Board that Joule Community Power be chosen as the CCA administrator for Saugerties. Mary Anne seconded. All in favor.

PROPOSAL: Mike. The Task Force recommend to the Town Board that the CCA contract be for 100% renewables only. Second: Patti. All in favor.

Sustainable Hudson Valley Group Purchasing Plan

Mary thought there would be more details by this meeting but not yet. The plan will offer to the public a number of different technologies: rooftop solar, heat pumps, EV charging stations, and energy storage. Vendors have been vetted. All of these can be part of an event. We need to find out if we can apply for points under the Climate Smart Communities program.

Vehicle Idling Policy

John: Wrapped into overall vehicle policy. Discussed in pre-board meeting last night. The whole plan is to bring the town in line with county practices; not a "green fleet" policy. Does not align with the Climate Smart Communities action. Does it need to be a stand-alone policy, or can it be wrapped in with a Fleet Procurement Policy? Mary said we need to look at the CSC requirements for points.

LED Street Lighting Upgrades

100% of the streetlights have been converted. Skip and Mike got documentation for the past streetlight upgrades. A letter of completion from Central Hudson, or their working schematic is needed so an additional CSC four points can be awarded John will forward this to Mary.

II REGULAR BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes Approval of May 21 meeting minutes was deferred to July.

Agenda Addendum– added Watershed Grants

Esopus Creek Updates – The Village of Saugerties has taken ownership of the aquatic vegetation harvester that was purchased with a cost share among the town, the village a local business. Harvest operation lead is Village of Saugerties employee Dan Hackett. Questions were raised on when the town would be able to use the harvester and whether a town employee would be operating the harvester.

CAC approved aquatic vegetation harvesting priorities and the systematic sampling and monitoring plan developed by Leslie Surprenant for the approximately 2 mile section of the river within the town but outside the village boundary. Leslie S. raised a potential issue of requiring a DEC Article 24 Wetlands permit for work occurring in the regulated wetland in the backwater across from the village beach. Also raised the question about legal transport of the harvested Eurasian Watermilfoil and Water Chestnut.

Mary O. recommended outreach to boaters to remain in the channel and stay outside of the vegetated areas to minimize the spread of invasive species. John S. suggested a sign at the village

boat access site; Mary suggested a flier to Esopus Creek Road boaters; Leslie suggested construction of a simple disposal station at the boat access site for boaters conducting legally-required inspections and removal of vegetation prior / after launch and retrieval using plans on Dept. of Environmental Conservation's website.

Actions:

- Determine if a transport / disposal permit is needed - Leslie Surprenant (*Follow up: No permit is needed per Chapter V Subchapter C Invasive Species Part 575 Prohibited and Regulated Invasive Species subpart 8 Exemptions*)
- Conduct survey of aquatic vegetation per sampling and monitoring plan – Leslie Surprenant lead

Town Board Report: John S. - Harvester has been used a few days in village part of river. Kathleen Gray – National Estuary Grants available – looking for suggestions for major projects the town could apply for funding.

Planning Board Report: Carole F. - Three solar plans have been presented; two have been approved but need to be reduced due to Central Hudson's substation capacity.

Announcements: Town transfer station is receiving $\frac{3}{4}$ ton per week of food waste for compost – a doubling of pre-coronavirus shutdown levels. Program cannot support self financially.

Comments: Mary M. – Water rates in municipalities are increasing and present an environmental justice issue – suggested town investigate implementing fees on a sliding scale. Also mentioned meeting on Black Lives Matter and environmental justice.

Adjourn: 8:00 p.m.