

WINTHROP ENERGY COMMITTEE - JUNE 20, 2016

MEETING MINUTES

Attendance: All were in attendance as follows - Frank Nitti, Energy Manager; Matthew Belletete, Chair; Renee DiCicco, Co-Chair; Brad Fischer; Carina Campobasso; Carol Walker

Where we are at now in our work to get a solar installer: Frank says the SolSmart program came across his desk as a good lead for us to work with. They offer LEED certification for buildings and each town or city has an array from lowest to highest designation that a town can be certified with – (gold, silver, etc.) according to the extent to which solar is developed. Although we wouldn't get any grant money this way, they offer expert advice (*could be the solar coach we need*) and will give us a chart to show how much work in solar needs to be done for each designation using a point system. For example one point per house/building for having a solar assessment, a lot more for installing, and other steps in-between. Basically the higher the number of residents who go with installation, the higher the designation Winthrop will receive. And the DOE, who has been pressuring Frank to get something started on solar in Winthrop, is concerned with how solar friendly a town is. The higher the designation you get, the more solar friendly you are rated. SolSmart will work with us to get the highest possible designation. They provide a high level of knowledge to interested residents, and especially help the permitting process go quicker and smoother. And the higher the designation we get, the lower the permit fees and the faster the work gets done. After some discussion, Frank said he will ask Green Communities to get something written up ASAP to apply with SolSmart.

An Second way to get a solar installer is to work with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAP) and here we have a choice to try to win a bid, amongst all the cities/towns of this area (101), by quickly developing our marketing strategy with our application and see if they like it the best and choose us. But if we lose the bid we can't get their help at all. The other choice is to put our name in the pool with other cities and towns who have chosen to work with MAP who would then do their teaching sessions for us along with several other cities and towns. That means we would likely be travelling a good distance out of Winthrop to attend and since we'd be one town among many, in order to get answers to questions that pertain just to Winthrop, we may have to wait a little instead of getting instant answers as we would if we were the host community. After discussion, we chose to go in the pool along with the other applicants without bidding to be a host community and not risk losing MAP's help entirely. Frank will do the work to ready us in applying to both MAP Council's program and SolSmart and we'll then see what works out. Whichever we end up going with, we will be able to receive \$1000 toward paying the solar coach from Solarize Mass.

More about MAP: MAP acts as a lobbying group for several communities going together; they do energy audits and evaluate climate resiliency and economic development. If several towns go together on a large solar development there are quite a lot of points to be gained, but there are sometimes problems with specific load zones. Winthrop has problem areas on the few parcels of land large enough for some kind of solar array; they are generally in the flood plains or within the take-off or landing path of airplanes. We also have to keep in mind, Frank mentioned, that our town has a lot of multi-family residences which makes us greatly in need of a coach to teach us how to present the information to owners of these multi-family buildings. September will be the earliest that MAP, with input from the CEC (Clean Energy Center) will decide through their Board if they are opening up the process again for a pool of applicants as they did last fall. In one or two weeks Frank says he'll know for sure. Frank will do

his research and develop a superb marketing plan so we can tell whoever we get as solar installer that we have a very robust plan.

Other considerations to keep in Mind: Carina mentioned that Sunlight Solar (now in Waltham) was a greatly helpful company to work with when they got solar installed at her house in 2011. They took care of the permitting, the engineer to test the roof for strength, and every necessary detail. Then because they took longer than expected to complete the work, they gave them a wi-fi router.

Next we discussed details of why our new middle/high school was only built to support solar but it wasn't installed and the ins and outs of suitable roofs. The newer solar arrays are much lighter than the ones of a few years ago. Frank told us that our Mass. legislators are studying and considering if we should look into PACE funding that helps towns replace old roofs of public buildings (schools, etc.) for a minimum cost as is done in some other states.

Other work for us to do Community Choice Aggregation, etc. This Community Choice is about electricity and about a town or city offering to all their residents a contract for electricity for all to have the same supplier in order to get a better group rate. We'll need to decide if we can get our town's people to go with 100% clean sourced energy or spend a little less for example 80% clean, and then we find the company to contract with. An example of a common package would give a fixed cost of electricity for 2 years. We could probably get a majority or a very large number of our residents to sign up and one great benefit for all customers is the assurance that both the Attorney General and Dept. of Public Utilities will make sure our chosen company is reliable. Residents/customers are free to opt out any time they choose but if and when they opt in again they won't then get the same rate that the town is getting, but instead the market rate at that time. Another wonderful benefit is that when we sign up with the electric supplier we will no longer have to pay the Mass Save fee that had been on each of our bills. We could then collect that fee for the town and run our own energy efficiency program with it. Frank thinks that with CCA (Community Choice Aggregation) the company we choose will make it easy for us to get the message to residents with flyers they give us and an email address for the town.

Renee offered to design the look of our new Energy Committee website and answer some very simple questions like – What is Renewable Energy, giving the link to Mass Save, and other basic information.

Frank suggests we also check out Map Dwell for Deer Island. They have mapped for Boston all the solar potential for each roof.

Next Meeting date not currently set.