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TOWN CLERK, ACTON

TOWN OF ACTON
GREEN ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES
MAY 6, 2013
Conference Room, Memorial Library, 2nd Floor
6:30 PM

Members Present: David Keene, Dennis Loria, Bruce Friedman, Mary Smith, Tom Michelman

Green Advisor to the Schools: Kate Crosby

Selectman: John Sonner

Municipal Properties Director: Dean Charter

Recording Secretary: Andrea Ristine

Energy Conservation Analyst: Pamela Cady

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6:35 Mr. Keene called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF THE MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Keene moved to approve the minutes of March 18 and April 8, 2013; Mr. Friedman 2nd, unanimous.

DISCUSS REVOLVING FUND FOR FY15

Upon query by Mr. Michelman, Mr. Charter reported that the revolving fund (RF) was approved and signed into law by Governor Patrick. However, no funds were allocated at the 2013 Annual Town Meeting (ATM). The Board should review potential projects that might be funded in FY'2015 as the budgeting process would start this fall, and review projects not yet funded that would fall within a five year plan. Mr. Charter suggested the replacement of the HVAC systems at the three existing fire stations since they are 50+ years old.

Upon query by Mr. Keene, Mr. Charter reported, depending on the estimated cost of a particular project, it could be funded within the operating budget process or by an individual warrant article to be approved by town meeting. A project that would be over \$25,000 must be budgeted through the capital plan. The Green Revolving Fund (GRF) for Acton (home rule petition) was approved the State Legislature, and signed into effect by the Governor. Rebates received from utility companies could be deposited into the GRF. The GRF could be used for the purposes and goals of the Green Advisory Board (GAB); projects to be funded through the GRF could be listed starting in FY'15.

Upon query by Mr. Michelman, Mr. Charter stated that he does not foresee any projects that would be bonded.

Upon query by Ms. Smith, Mr. Charter noted that the GRF would be set up specifically for the Town, the elementary and public schools could be considered within the perimeters of the GRF but not the regional schools. The Town doesn't want to dedicate more funds towards the schools. Ms. Smith stated that she feels it should be considered.

Mr. Charter noted that administering grants and revolving funds is very time consuming.

Mr. Sonner noted that the Sidewalk Committee discussed a RF for sidewalks with the schools and felt that it was not worth the administrative overhead.

Upon query by Mr. Keene, Mr. Charter suggested that the GAB identify and develop a list of important projects then pursue the proper funding mechanism.

DISCUSS ENERGY CONSERVATION MEASURES (ECMs) BASED ON UPDATED PLAN

Ms. Cady reviewed the list of energy conservation projects noting that the lighting retrofit upgrades at the three fire stations has been completed; town hall HVAC and hot water pumps are still to be done.

Upon the request of the GAB members, Ms. Cady will filter the list removing the projects that have been completed from projects still to be done and remove the school's projects.

Mr. Charter reported that the retrofits at the Public Safety Facility started today (5/6); the Town will pay \$35,000 for work with a two and half year estimated payback. New software for the HVAC systems at the PSF will have a contracted maintenance agreement; the new system will allow overrides for the areas that are not occupied 24/7, whereas these areas currently run 24/7.

Mr. Charter also reported that several upgrades have already been done under the Green Communities Grant (GCG); the work at the schools must be 100% complete by May 31, 2013 to meet the criteria of the GCG.

UPDATE ON FY14 BUDGET

Mr. Charter reported that the FY '14 budget was approved at the 2013 Annual Town Meeting with no challenges or changes which allows for some projects and continued funding for the Energy Conservation Analyst position.

DISCUSS RESIDENTIAL ENERGY AUDIT ENCOURAGING

Mr. Charter reported that town staff's thoughts are that it would be beneficial for homeowners to get a Homes Energy Rating System (HERS) rating; the incentive for homeowners to get a HERS rating is that the Town would fast-track building applications and permits if their home is already rated. The Town Manager has authorized the ability to provide the incentive; the Building Department can implement the fast-tracking of permits but it is other departments involved through the permitting process that have the potential to slow it down.

Upon query by Mr. Friedman, Ms. Smith suggested that it might be more encouraging if NStar could set up a stand or satellite van in town for homeowners to easily sign up for an energy audit.

Upon query by Mr. Friedman, Mr. Charter noted that it seems as though zoning enforcement is the area of permitting that slows down the review process.

Ms. Smith suggested that there also might be more incentive if there was a way to get NStar to pay for a majority of the energy improvements on residential homes or through Mass Save Audits.

Mr. Charter suggested that an article could be published in the Town's Municipal Quarterly newsletter that is sent out with the quarterly tax bills.

Mr. Charter stated that he will report back to the GAB next month regarding the department head's response to the incentive of fast-tracking the permitting process for homeowners that have a HERS rating on their existing homes.

DISCUSS IDEAS TO FACILITATE THE COMMUNITY SOLAR GARDEN

Mr. Friedman reported of a Home Power Magazine article which states that a town in Kentucky, which a state that produces more than 90% of their electricity from coal, offered 60 Solar PV modules cooperatively with its residents and all were subscribed in four and a half days. The response was so immediate that the planned

second phase of the installation of an additional 60 modules was moved up to become part of phase one. The 120-module offering was subscribed for in less than four months.

Upon query by the Board, Mr. Charter stated that he will contact the representatives in Acton pertaining to a solar garden, similar to what is being done in Harvard. Some zoning changes were voted at Annual Town Meeting to help solar gardens get through the permitting process.

Mr. Keene reported that some residents of Acton are confusing the municipal solar array project on the DPW landfill with private solar gardens.

Upon query by Mr. Michelman, Mr. Charter stated that he will provide a copy of the new Bylaw as voted at the 2013 ATM to the GAB at their next scheduled meeting in June, since the Attorney General's office should have been able to review it by that time.

Mr. Michelman suggested that the Town approach a commercial entity in Acton in pursuit of a solar garden similar to that of the REI parking lot in Framingham. Other locations where this might be possible could be the MBTA parking lot or NARA Park.

Mr. Charter noted the possibility of leasing the 'air-rights' for the infrastructure of a solar garden to gain revenue for the town.

Other possible locations mentioned were WR Grace, 116 Concord Road, the School's Lower Fields and the Route 2 land off School Street/Craig Road.

Upon query by Mr. Keene, Mr. Michelman stated that he would be willing to present to and update the Board of Selectmen (BoS) to gain interest and support of GAB's, renewable energy and solar gardens.

Mr. Charter noted that the BoS hold annual oversight meetings with all town boards and committees; Mr. Keene asked if it would be possible to request time on the BoS agenda in addition to an annual oversight meeting.

Mr. Charter stated that he would contact the Town Manager to see when the GAB could be scheduled to meet with the BoS. Mr. Keen stated that he would help Mr. Michelman with the presentation.

Mr. Michelman stated that he would also contact the Town of Harvard in regards to the status of their solar garden project.

STATUS UPDATE GREEN COMMUNITIES GRANT

Upon note by Ms. Cady, Mr. Charter confirmed that the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) is offering grant funds for electric vehicle and charging stations but if funds were awarded the Town must provide free charging stations for electric cars.

Ms. Crosby reported that the HVAC and air-sealing projects funded through the Green Communities grant are either underway or completed.

Ms. Crosby also reported one issue of a recent purchase of a driver-education vehicle that did not meet the Fuel Efficient Vehicle policy that is part of the Green Community criteria; a violation was issued by the State. The district will file a "corrective action plan" with the state indicating measures taken to prevent this from reoccurring.

The Acton Public Schools and Acton-Boxborough Regional School District has received a district-wide "Green Ribbon Schools" award for energy conservation and sustainability from the US Department of Education, one of just 14 districts recognized in the US.

ACTUALS ON UTILITIES CONSUMPTION UPDATE

Mr. Charter gave a brief overview of the Town's current FY'13 utility consumption noting favorable findings with the Memorial Library having a 4% reduction of electricity and natural gas due to energy efficiency upgrades. Lighting upgrades at the three fire stations have been recently completed.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mr. Charter noted that the Board should review the list of future scheduled meetings through the summer and in 2014.

The GAB agreed to continue meeting on Monday nights and meet as scheduled for the summer months.

LANDFILL SOLAR PV PROJECT

Mr. Charter reported that AMERESCO is scheduled to start work on May 7, noting that there have been many rescheduled dates. He understands that the net metering cap reservation disappears November 2013. The Town has been informed that site grading will be done one month from now and have been promised that the project will be producing electricity by August 15, 2013.

Mr. Charter also reported that the net meter credits can also be applied towards Acton's Waste Water Treatment Plant which should consume all the anticipated credits from the proposed Solar PV Facility; the Schedule Z net meter credits can be changed twice per year.

8:21 Ms. Smith departed.

NEXT MEETING AGENDA TOPICS

- FY'15 Revolving Fund
- Incentive permitting - Mr. Charter will meet with department heads on 5/9/13 and address the topic
- Set a date with the BoS regarding the solar community garden
- 2014 Calendar - The GAB agreed to continue to meet on Mondays; Mr. Charter will pursue confirmation of room reservation dates.
- Distribute utility spread sheets

8:32 Meeting adjourned.



Chairperson

6/10/13

Date:

AHR:ar
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