



Town of Greenwich

Conservation Commission

Town Hall – 101 Field Point Road - Greenwich, CT 06830

Phone 203-622-6461 Fax 203-622-3795

conservation@greenwichct.org

Conservation Commission Energy Committee Meeting

Thursday, January 30, 2020

Land Use Conference Room, 2nd Floor, Town Hall

In attendance: Bob Brady, Steve Hall, Skip Parker, Robert Brady and Urling Searle

Also in attendance: Patricia Sesto, director and Sarah Coccaro, conservation resource manager

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by Patricia Sesto

2. RTM Committee and Regular Meetings Recap

Sesto summarized the events leading up to today's meeting. Sesto visited three Representative Town Meeting (RTM) committee meetings in January: Finance, Legislative & Rules, and Public Works, and the January 21st RTM all-districts meeting. Sesto then described general comments and recommendations she received during her visits.

In particular, it was recommended that Sesto visit other committees in the RTM, such as BOC, Town Services, Land Use, and Appointments, to meet with their members and discuss the implications of the new ordinance.

Sesto thanked Energy Committee members Rusty Parker and Urling Searle for attending the RTM committee meetings, in addition to Margarita Alban, Chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission who also spoke in favor of the Energy Commission ordinance.

Following the RTM committee meetings, Sesto made edits to the original ordinance to address concerns. She presented the newer version of the ordinance to the Energy

Committee in two forms for discussion: one with tracked changes in red, one without red tracked changes that read with all changes made.

Robert Brady questioned under which authority is this new commission? Brady further elaborated, “from where does the commission obtain the authority to do the things it intends to?” He recommended that this clarification needs to go into the ordinance document.

Moving through edits to the ordinance, Sesto stated that she hasn’t received much push-back about the composition of the new commission. This was in reference to the seven regular members and seven ex officio members. The Committee agreed to keep the language as it was updated.

Skip Parker stated there seems to be overwhelmingly universal support for the creation of an energy commission, including in his district.

Sesto previously met with Dr. Toni Jones, Superintendent of Public Schools and Dan Watson, Facilities Manager of the Board of Education (BOE), and included their comments in the ordinance.

Brady expressed concerns with giving town staff voting rights while on the energy commission. Sesto explained two benefits to giving staff voting privileges: 1. It gives staff a seat at the table to vote (becoming a stakeholder with a voice), and 2. Voting encourages participation.

S. Parker noticed a spelling error with Nathaniel Witherell in Section 2-131-b. Brady recommending removing Nathaniel Witherell representation from the ex officio list completely.

Sesto continued addressing changes made to the proposed ordinance and directed the Committee members to look at Section 2-134 Powers and Duties. A common concern that came up during Sesto’s committee visits were if the new Energy Commission would be regulatory or advisory. The ordinance now explicitly states the commission will be advisory.

Discussion continued on Section 2-134-d-1 pertaining to language on issuing a set energy reduction goal in the ordinance. Currently it’s written for “...20% for the near term and 40% for the longer term.” Sesto explained the 20% reduction in the near term was included based off the declaration made by the town back in 2012. Brady recommended that one of the first actions by the new commission would be to adopt a set of goals, one of which is setting an energy reduction goal. Brady continued that he doesn’t believe the

percentage of energy reduction should be listed in the ordinance. Sesto explained she had a similar discussion with one of the RTM Committees, and they recommended to include a “whereas clause” in the ordinance, as “whereas in 2012, the Town signed this declaration to reduce energy by 20%.”

S. Parker expressed concerns with the ordinance he has heard from his district members, such as the need for a commission if the Town is already able to achieve energy reduction. Sesto explained this new energy commission would be one of the only commissions that is net-positive in terms of savings for the Town. The Energy Committee agreed to keep 2-134-d-1 but without the specific energy reduction goals for 20% and 40%.

Discussion moved to Section 2-134-d-e, budget. Sesto stated currently, the ordinance is written so the energy commission’s budget will be under the Office of the First Selectman (OFS). Brady expressed concern that the Energy Commission’s budget line be its own, a separate line under the OFS. Sesto will follow up with the Town Supervisor to get a budget line within the OFS.

Sesto reviewed an area of confusion with RTM Committees, which dealt with why this ordinance proposal was made out of the Environmental Affairs department. Sesto discussed this concern with the First Selectman, Fred Camillo. Moving forward, the OFS will put out this ordinance under its name and not Environmental Affairs.

Sesto reported Amy Siebert, commissioner of public works, is writing a letter in support of this new energy commission. Sesto also hopes that Dr. Jones will write a letter of support. Al Monelli, superintendent of building construction and maintenance, reported he has been questioned by the Board of Estimation and Taxation (BET) on the prospect of an energy commission. He described to Sesto he is able to do “tier 1” energy improvements, such as changing lights to LEDs, etc., but to get to “tier 2”, bigger energy improvements, there needs outside knowledge and expertise.

The Committee discussed common misconceptions around building LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) vs. Energy Star certification and how to communicate the differences in discussions.

Sesto discussed another area of concern: the difference between forming a committee vs. a commission. Sesto noted that when discussing this question, to be careful to not diminish the work of committees while trying to promote this commission. One difference is a commission has accountability to the RTM.

3. Next Steps

The submission deadline for the next RTM call is February 14. Any feedback received between now and then needs to be passed to Sesto. Camillo will be presenting the energy commission ordinance at the RTM Committee meetings. Sesto encouraged all the current energy committee members to go to these RTM Committee meetings to show support.

Next RTM Committee meetings are March 2 and 3. RTM District meetings are March 4 and 5. The all-district RTM meeting is on March 9.

Sesto will send out electronically revised proposed ordinance to the Energy Committee members. Brady will resend his comments to Sesto. Searle asked for a revised “highlights” list to be able to discuss at district meetings.

The Committee discussed asking energy conscious residents and local business owners to speak during RTM Committee and District meetings.

4. Next Meeting

Thursday, February 6, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. in the Cone Room.

5. Adjourn

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:31 a.m.