

**MINUTES - BOARD OF EDUCATION PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD JULY 27, 2021 IN THE HUMISTON BOARD ROOM**

Planning Committee Members Present: Andrew Martelli, Timothy White, Kathryn Hallen

Additional Attendees Present: Vincent Masciana, Chief Operating Officer
Richard Clavet – Facilities Manager
Dan Bombero – Capital Project Manager
Energy Resources, USA LLC:
Douglas Lombardi – Director of Business
Development
Morgan Kennedy – Renewable Programs Manager

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Martelli called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

AUDIENCE

Ms. Toni Spera of 40 Brentwood Drive read a statement explaining her views and opposition to having her children who are students wear masks to school when they return in the fall of 2021. Mr. Martelli and the Planning Committee members thanked her for attending the meeting and for her comments. They also suggested that she attend the upcoming Board of Education business meeting which is being rescheduled to be held either August 12 or August 28, 2021. Ms. Spera noted that she previously emailed the Board of Education members with her comments.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL SOLAR ENERGY INSTALLATIONS

Mr. Martelli asked Messrs. Lombardi and Kennedy from Energy Resources to provide the Committee with the update from the ZREC applications that were recently filed with Eversource for potential solar energy installations at Highland and Doolittle Elementary Schools.

A PowerPoint presentation was made by the gentlemen from Energy Resources summarizing the proposed locations for solar carports and ground mounted systems at both Highland and Doolittle schools as well as the results of the ZREC applications. In short, due to the high cost of materials and construction at the present time (rolled steel and copper were specifically mentioned), installing solar carports is not a financially viable option. While the ground mount systems proposed are financially viable at both Highland and Doolittle, meaning that the cost of power from a solar array would be about 15% lower than the current cost of commercial power, the proposed locations would occupy areas that would reduce the use of field areas.

In the conversation that ensued during the review of the presentation and afterwards, the following points were made by the Committee members and the attendees:

- The LREC/ZREC program is ending and PURA is expected to announce a new program(s) to incentivize solar energy installation in November/December 2021. The new program is expected to eliminate the net metering option that is currently available with the ZREC program making the current bid offer an attractive option for the district.
- In addition to direct cost savings on electricity supply, an advantage of installing a solar array at the present time or in the near future is that it would serve as a hedge against

electricity inflation because entering into a Power Purchase Agreement associated with a solar array would enable the district to have a fixed price for electricity for 20 years.

- In addition to the financial benefits of a solar carport, it would provide covered parking and potentially even covered walkways as is the case for the Doolittle proposal.
- Messrs. Lombardi and Kennedy advised that if the winning ZREC bids for Highland and Doolittle are accepted, the district has quite a bit of flexibility as to when construction can start and can be completed as well as the size, location and the type of the array. They explained that in accordance with the program documents, construction would not have to be completed until April of 2023 and therefore a project decision does not have to be made until approximately April of 2022. Also noted was the fact that the April 2023 deadline can be extended. Further, the array type can be changed from a carport to a ground or roof mounted array if desired by the district.
- The process to accept the bid, the deadline and the cost was explained and then discussed by the Committee. In order to accept the bid, the Eversource Energy *Standard Contract for the Purchase and Sale of Connecticut Class I Renewable Energy Credits from Low or Zero Emissions Projects* needs executed by the deadline date of August 5, 2021. In addition to the executed contract, Eversource requires the payment for a Performance Assurance Bond which is \$2,120 for the Doolittle ZREC and \$\$2,992 for the Highland ZREC. If the project is completed, the performance assurance amount paid is refunded to the district. While the district is not committed to complete the solar project by executing the agreement, failure to complete the project would result in forfeiting the amount of the performance assurance bond. The consensus of the Committee and Mr. Masciana was that it was a worthwhile investment to be made at this time in order to preserve the ZREC award for completing a project or projects in the future.
- The ZREC also allows for the project construction to be designated to a firm selected by the district which would be through a bid or request for proposal process.
- The Committee was in general agreement as to not going forward with either of the ground mounted solar arrays at Doolittle or Highland as they are located on fields that are in use and such fields are in high demand across our Town.
- Mr. Martelli indicated that he was in favor of the solar carport at Highland due to its location, tucked into the front of the school near the array at the Cheshire Police Station. He added that he was not in favor of the solar arrays proposed at Doolittle because they would be too prominent visually and detract from the aesthetics of the school.
- The Committee was in agreement that the flexibility allowed by the ZREC for both Highland and Doolittle as to the type of array and the extended time period for committing to and constructing a particular array through April of 2023 was attractive.

MOTION by Mr. White, seconded by Ms. Hallen.

MOVED *That the Planning Committee agrees to the engagement with Eversource to potentially complete solar array projects at Doolittle and Highland Schools in an amount not to exceed \$6,000.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously.

- Mr. Masciana noted that he would review the contract terms with the Town Attorney prior to executing the contracts and making arrangements for the payment of the performance assurance bonds.
- Mr. White discussed the potential for a Small ZREC project adding a ground mounted solar array at the pump station located on the far west side at the end of the Cheshire High School property past the baseball field. Upon further review of the Town's GIS map during the meeting, it was determined that the close proximity of the wetlands that essentially surround the pump station building would likely prevent such an installation from being permitted.
- Mr. White also discussed the possibility of installing a battery array at Highland Elementary School in the future to serve as a backup in the event of a power failure instead of adding a diesel-powered emergency generator as was proposed by the school district in its 5 year capital plan for 2022-23.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. Martelli, which was seconded by Mr. White, the meeting was adjourned at 6:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Attest:

Vincent J. Masciana
Chief Operating Officer

Carol Jesensky, Executive Assistant

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