

MINUTES: SEPTEMBER 24, 2020
HELD VIA ZOOM
ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Meeting called to order: 7 pm

Attendance: Andrea Chasen, Liz Bone, Lyn Simmons, Dave Marinelli, Dave Miller, Kevin Shea, Steve Marantz guest: Nick Georgantas, Minoos Tehrani

1. Meeting began with Andrea reading of open meeting law pursuant to Governor Baker's guidelines during pandemic emergency declaration
2. Discussion of Minutes of August 27, 2020: Motion to accept the minutes by Andrea Chasen and seconded by Liz Bone.. Motion passed.

3. Facilities updates by Nick Georgantas:

Over the last few months the following updates have been made to the facilities:

A. New refrigeration controls at all schools installed in partnership with Advanced Energy Group

- -New evaporator motors
- -New fan controllers
- -New door heaters
- -New door heater controller
- -Remote high temp notifications: this system uses text messaging
- -Remote monitoring (fridgebot)

B. Energy Measures taken at Wolf Swamp, Blueberry Hill, Williams and Glenbrook with RISE Engineering

- -Foam air gap sealing of school perimeters
- -Additional insulation installation (insulation board where feasible)
- -Exterior door sweep install and upgrades

C. Ongoing improvements:

- -Completion of phase 3 LED (final phase) install at LHS to be completed first week of October
- -Wolf Swamp boiler install set for later this fall (boiler 2 of 2)
- -Town Hall boiler replacement set for later this fall

D. Future improvements:.

- Capital request set to be submitted for final boiler update in the school system at Center School. Once completed, all elementary schools will be running with complete sets of modern boilers.

- K. Shea asked about the pool, and pool was drained during the time that school has been out to save energy.
- D. Miller will send Kurt Friedman's pool report to N. Georgantas. (Action item)

Question: M.Tehrani asked if Longmeadow has solar batteries.

4. Town Manager update

- Our MVP grant was denied, and Lyn reached out to Senator Lesser and the MVP committee for feedback. The grant went to Leominster for storm water issues. Our community may not be diverse enough. The grant might have some residue money we can ask about. Have not heard about META grant yet.
 - PVPC has a non green community grant for \$3000 to be used for an EV charger Town plan. Agawam just completed one, we can ask Marc Strange. It might help unite the town and businesses on the same front.
- The Committee has compiled a list of possible ideas to be submitted for funding in the next round for Green Communities funding.
 - variable speed motor for LHS pool
 - EV charging stations at schools
 - Sewer pump motor changing voltage from AC to DC.
 - hybrid vehicles
 - solar panels for Senior Center

5. Workshops

- D.Marinelli will host a composting workshop with the library on Nov 4. D.Marinelli will ask LCTV to film it, and reach out to Gardeners Club and Conservative Commission to promote it. Liz will post on FB page. Chasen made a motion to go forward with the first workshop. D. Miller second, all in favor
- Other Workshop ideas:
 - Contractors in our area are not aware of green initiatives. We need to inform contractors and homeowners. Heat Smart, Cool Smart is a workshop. Ask Melissa from PVPC to lead workshop in January.
 - S. Marantz discusses heat pump program from Dept of Energy. They also have a solar and heat pump or battery storage program with rebates and incentives. Maybe we should revisit this for Longmeadow.
 - Passive house workshop for the Spring.

L. Simmons will get a login for civicplus for Liz to create an energy and sustainability committee webpage on the town's website. A. Chasen and L. Bone will add content to be like www.greennewton.org (Action item)

6. New business-

- S.Marantz asked the committee to sign a letter of objection of the biomass fuel plant proposal for Page Blvd, Springfield and send to Rep. Brian Ashe. Not only

does it pollute the pioneer valley, it requires logging, and taxpayers to supplement funding of the plant.

- D. Miller made a motion for our committee to send the letter to Rep. Brian Ashe.
- L. Bone seconded
- All in favor
- Chasen will draft letter and send around.(Note: this was done and the final letter is attached to these minutes)

7. Next meeting: Scheduled for October 29 at 7:15 PM

S. Marantz made a motion to adjourn.

A. Chasen seconded

All in favor - 8:10 pm

Respectfully submitted:

Liz Bone

LONGMEADOW ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE
20 Williams Street
Longmeadow, MA 01106

September 28, 2020

Representative Brian Ashe
[24 Beacon St.](#)
[Room 236](#)
[Boston, MA, 02133](#)

Re: Comments about H. 4933

Dear Representative Ashe,

I am writing on behalf of the Longmeadow's Energy and Sustainability Committee to offer some comments on H. 4933.

In general, our committee is pleased that the House and Senate are working towards making the Global Warming Solutions Act's requirements for greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction a reality. Like the rest of the country, we know that there is a good deal of destruction to our country as a whole because of disasters created or worsened by climate change. And our state is not immune to these disasters. So please accept our thanks for the work you are doing.

We are also pleased to note that this bill acknowledges that as the state moves forward on real and measurable GHG reductions, it must do so "to ensure that the commonwealth achieves its required emissions reductions equitably and in a manner that protects low and moderate income persons and environmental justice". The promotion and support for environmental justice throughout the state is laudable.

It is with the awareness that the House and Senate are taking climate change seriously and moving forward to support a strong transition to renewable energy that we offer our concerns that this bill contains an inherent contradiction in it when it includes "biomass" as a method of clean energy.

The use of biomass has been studied assiduously and the conclusions from reputable and respected scientists and scientific organizations is that biomass is neither clean nor a renewable energy source as needed for the protection of our world. As you know, the concept of biomass refers to the burning of any plant material as an energy source. What has been found when this is done on a level necessary to generate energy is that "(h)arvesting wood for energy production worsens climate change immediately, and the harms it causes can persist for many decades or even centuries. It also endangers the very ecosystems we rely on to help stabilize global temperature rise and make

communities more resilient to climate change” (see: <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/sasha-stashwick/how-biomass-industry-sent-sustainability-smoke>).

The House bill, in addition to identifying various renewable energy sources, also goes further and recognizes the need to create natural systems to sequester carbon dioxide gases. The bill provides that the state adopt and promulgate “goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and **increase carbon sequestration** on natural and working lands; and develop a natural and working lands plan that outlines actions to meet these statewide goals”.

Here is the first inherent contradiction in the bill: it first allows for an energy source that will encourage the destruction of the very thing that is needed to act as a sponge and soak up our GHGs.

The second contradiction comes about because, while the bill laudably recognizes that this state needs to be even handed in how it protects all of its residents, particularly those in low and moderate income areas, the only biomass facility that is under consideration in the Commonwealth is proposed to be located at a site that sits in a low income neighborhood. And biomass, no matter how carefully it is operated, emits particulate matter that will lead to air pollution increases for the geographic area immediately surrounding the facility, and then, because air knows no boundaries, for the entire Pioneer Valley and beyond.

Our committee is therefore asking that the House remove that portion of Section 15 that defines “non-carbon emitting energy” so broadly as to include biomass power plants as a “non-carbon emitting source.”

Our reasons for this request are:

- Scientific studies have identified biomass as a **major source** of carbon dioxide emissions. In fact, studies have found that wood-burning plants emit 50% more carbon dioxide from coal plants for the same amount of electricity generated.
- In addition to producing high emissions, wood-burning biomass plants also impose appalling conditions on the communities in which they are placed. In order to continuously run as a reliable source of energy, these facilities require the continuous feed of plant matter. Experience shows that to make this proposed facility economically viable, it would require 25 ton trucks hauling wood products 4 times/hour (on average) to it. In addition to the other emissions, local residents would be subjected to additional noise and air pollution from these trucks.
- In cities like Springfield (where a biomass plant has been opposed for 12 years), air pollution has been proven time and again to have detrimental health impacts. In fact, Springfield has been identified as the “Asthma Capital of the United States.” How can the House possibly support inflicting additional air pollution on an already-burdened community: this would fly in the face of the ideals that the

state recognizes the need for environmental justice for the low and moderate income communities.

In the face of all these negatives, there are a number of certainties:

—Should the state continue to support biomass and provide subsidies for this non-renewable energy source, it is likely that other biomass facilities will be proposed in other low income communities; thereby giving lie to one of the core principles of the clean and renewable energy development.

—Our state forests, already under stress from climate change induced droughts and other natural disasters, will be further endangered by harvesting. Our forests and green space need to be preserved because they form one of the few available natural sequestration systems we have. We should be developing more open and forested land, not encouraging its destruction.

—The public, when informed, will be profoundly unhappy to learn that their tax dollars are being used to subsidize this dirty energy source.

Our communities, our state, our country and, indeed, the world, are undeniably in a state of climate emergency. There is literally no time left for our legislature to kick the “climate action can” down the road. This truth is that climate destruction is now locked in: what we do today has immediate consequences for us and for our entire way of life.

Representative Ashe, we ask that you please help us prevent a terrible situation from getting worse: Please contact the Conference Committee and urge them to remove from Section 15 any language referring to bio-mass energy as a “non-carbon emitting” energy source.

Thank you in advance for your help with this matter. The Committee would appreciate learning about the results of our request for this amendment.

Sincerely,

Andrea Chasen
Chair: Longmeadow Energy and Sustainability Committee

P.S: I have attached a memo providing some suggested amendments to Section 15.
Attachment: