

Energy Committee Minutes (Draft)

Town of Fair Haven

September 28, 2015

Present: Herbert Durfee III, Bob Richards, Mike Stannard, Chris Stanton, Chris Cole, Pete Ruby, Neil Robinson, Matthew Lyon

Absent: Chris Cole, Pete Ruby

Call to order (7:00 –Mike)

The present member of the board brainstormed and discussed each member's concerns in issuing a recommendation on a proposal to build a net metering solar project at the Fair Haven Municipal air park, by Stella Stella, Co.

The following letter was drafted from the discussion:

“September 28, 2015

Michael R. Stannard

Chair, Fair Haven Energy Committee

To: [Fair Haven Select Board](#)

Per order of the Select Board the Energy committee issues the following recommendation for continued progress in the proposed business agreement that would provide the Fair Haven Municipality with discounted electricity production through net metering.

It is the unanimous consensus of the energy committee members present in reviewing said Stella Solar proposal that the utilization of this unique type of opportunity be taken advantage of before it is phased out in the next year and a half. We feel it important to take advantage of Federal Incentives for municipal purchase of electricity at a discounted rate, from solar production.

The committee has developed a list of questions that remain unanswered and need to be resolved, in haste. Much of this list includes tasks that must be accomplished in a very short time period.

First, it has come to our attention that there may be a stipulation in the deed to the "airport" property against any development other than as use for an airport. The board believes that there also may be a great deal of public disinterest in devaluing one of the town's most valuable assets. This property is viewed by many as acres of valuable property, a great recreation asset, open space, wildlife sanctuary, and potential development site for municipal interests. This type of project would require public forum that could lead the town down a long controversial road; time not being on the side of said solar projects at this point in the program. Some of the many predictable arguments against this type of project at the "airport" might include a negative effect on the airport to be re-commissioned during the working years of the project. Depreciation of property value if the town ever decided to sell the property. Potential esthetic issues with neighbors, including the Air National Guard and residents of the area. Because of these and many other potential tax payer concerns with the proposed project, our committee has decided that a project of this type should not devalue town or private property in order to reduce our expenditures; and we do not support the development of any sized solar park at the Fair Haven Airport property.

We and a committee do believe that the basic tenets of the proposal should be taken into consideration at other less valuable (if not worthless) properties, owned by the community. The nearly 30 acres of closed landfill and surrounding property on Dump Road was the area most referenced at our review meeting, although, there are other properties of interest, such as some acreage near the Inman Pond Water treatment plant. The committee believes a project like this should make less valuable property more valuable. There may even be added federal incentive for use of a capped landfill.

We also believe that this proposal's lease payments to the town are too low. Our property is in our hands now, but as caretakers for future generations. We should not sell ourselves short on our precious land and should not accept such a low price per year at a fixed amount.

Lastly, the energy committee is in consensus that the use of 100% of the town's potential net metering credits would negate the potential the proposed hydro-electric project at the depot street dam or any future net metering projects. We believe that the overall long term benefits of profit and ownership of capital from the proposed hydro project trumps the approximately \$30,000/year (\$900,000 over 30 years) of savings to the town from said solar development. We as a group are leery of unanswered questions involving liability of the limited liability corporations building the solar array and the banks that back the 30 year life of the operation.

This being said, the Fair Haven Energy Committee does believe that the Select Board should determine the number of kilowatt hours they would project to be used by FHUHS in the coming 30 years. We recommend the town communicates with the school board about purchase of that power at a reduced rate in return for a discounted payment from the town from revenue generated through taxes. This would allow our town to save money using a worthless piece of land in our town to produce green

power that lowers the taxes of its residents without damaging the possibility of a more lucrative electric production that the town is on the verge deciding on.

It is our recommendation that the Select Board put out a request for bids on this type of project at a different location of their choice. It is our recommendation that we do not accept less than twice the amount proposed by Stella Solar as a long term lease agreement. It is our recommendation that the board acts quickly to set up a public forum on said project by the last week of October.

This committee agrees that Fair Haven needs to stop losing opportunities from inaction and that there is a place for a solar project in our town.

Michael R. Stannard

Chairman, Energy Committee”

Meeting adjourned (8:30)

Mike Stannard

Chairman, Energy Committee

Fair Haven, Vermont