

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: James Horwitz, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

Also Present: William Blake, Steven DeMaio, Charles Dumais, Tony Giamba, Marianne Lippard

A meeting of the MicroGrid Committee of the Amity Regional Board of Education was held on Monday, May 19, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. in the Presentation Room at the District Offices.

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m.

2. Discussion of MicroGrid Project

James Stirling was chosen to serve as chair. Tracey Lane Russo was chosen to serve as secretary.

Mr. Horwitz said that it is his understanding that discussions regarding the MicroGrid have been going on for some time, but not everyone was aware of the communications. In 2011, the State experienced bad storms and Woodbridge lost power. With the passing of the first selectman in Woodbridge and the retirement of Superintendent John Brady, we are left without much information about the status of these discussions. People are trying to continue the conversations, but we have limited knowledge of MicroGrids. Mr. Horwitz noted that he has some reservations about the MicroGrid at this point.

In 2012, the State expressed interest in MicroGrids. The pre-application process would be followed by an application process. Weston and Sampson of Rocky Hill helped with the pre-application process at no charge. Facilities Director Jim Saisa was involved in the pre-application process. Mr. Saisa possesses a great deal of technical knowledge about MicroGrids. The town of Woodbridge submitted a full grant application. This involved a \$30,000-\$40,000 expenditure. Mr. Horwitz noted that in June or early summer 2013, the grant was awarded. In Fall 2013, a meeting took place with Weston and Sampson and several other people in Woodbridge.

Ms. Russo questioned the purpose of the fall meeting. Mr. Blake said that there were two meetings prior to a meeting with the Facilities Committee. These meetings basically talked about what a MicroGrid is. Chris Wester met with the Facilities Committee to present the project in more detail. It was noted that the grant is for \$3 million.

Mr. Dumais said that the approximate cost for installing the power units is \$9 million. The grant provides 30 percent of the cost up front. The additional 70 percent would come in afterwards and be built into the contract with the developer.

Mr. Blake and Mr. Horwitz noted that they thought the total cost was \$9 million.

Mr. Horwitz noted that Mr. Levine has been focused on the financial aspects. We haven't been able to get answers on everything. Mr. Horwitz noted that some of the equipment would be located at the High School campus. The Woodbridge first selectman has expressed interest in this technology for energy reliability, greener energy and the cost.

Ms. Russo said that she has put together a timeline of these discussions and Dr. Brady left in June 2013. She was concerned to learn that Mr. Dumais called Dr. Brady and he had no recollection of this. We were told that this was a joint application and this has been moved along without the school chiefs knowing what is happening.

Mr. Horwitz said that as he remembers it, when natural gas was coming into Woodbridge, there were discussions between the town and the District. The discussions may have involved Jim Saisa and the late Woodbridge First Selectman Edward Sheehy.

Ms. Russo asked Mr. Dumais to speak to Mr. Saisa to gain a better understanding of the progression of this project. She would also like to know if the micro turbine can be located somewhere else and we can tie into it.

Tony Giamba said that he has never heard of a micro turbine integrating with a fuel cell and he is very experienced with this technology. He noted that fuel cells shut down frequently. We should try to talk to Branford High School about their experience.

Mr. Dumais said that a tentative time has been arranged for 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 27th in Branford.

Mr. Horwitz said that pilot projects like this are going on throughout Connecticut. He recently read an article about this topic in the both the New Haven Register and the Wall Street Journal.

Mr. Giamba said that he worked at Capstone Micro turbines.

Ms. Russo said that her understanding is that money could be made by selling excess energy back to the grid, but the District can't be involved in that. Locking in a price could be good for us.

Mr. Horwitz said that the next step in this process would be to send out RFPs. It is his understanding, however, that once you enter into the RFP process, you are committed to going forward. He believes that power losses after recent storms are pushing us forward on something that we wouldn't have considered 10 years ago. Despite its innocuous name, a MicroGrid is a power generating station that would live in our parking lot. We're not in the business of being a power station. To try to grasp this concept and all the details of this type of proposal is not our strength. Most of us really don't know much about this topic. One thing is clear, if a company is coming in here for this purpose, they want to make money. It doesn't seem to make sense to do this and lock in while trying to understand a power generating station. We can't go along with this just to please the town of Woodbridge.

Mr. DeMaio said that he is concerned that if we choose not to go forward with this, it will cause a division, which we don't want to see happen.

Mr. Blake said that he shares Mr. DeMaio's concern. Our subcommittee needs to come up with a principled analysis as to what the data shows. We're not energy speculators, but we need to keep an open mind, in case this is a beneficial arrangement for Amity that will move us forward and reduce our carbon footprint. We are not blaming Woodbridge for this predicament, with the change of leadership at Amity, there might have been an oversight. Mr. Nast came on board and had the task of creating a budget. He doesn't believe that we have to act quickly on this.

Mr. Horwitz said that he is skeptical about this plan. From what he has read to this point, he isn't convinced that this energy system is more environmentally sound. For Amity, this system would be an environmental negative.

Ms. Russo said that it isn't clear that this was a joint application.

Mr. Dumais said that it has been said that our students can learn from this operation.

The question was raised about what lessons the students can gain from the MicroGrid.

Mr. Dumais noted that it is his understanding that there will be a weather station.

Ms. Russo said that she doesn't feel that this type of information needs to be learned on campus.

Mr. Stirling said that he would like some clarification as to this Committee's charge. He questioned whether the Committee is supposed to come up with a list of pros and cons and the intangibles, such as physical risk, potential dangers from the plant, etc. He also questioned the timeframe for drawing conclusions from the

information gathering process. It is his understanding that the town received a tentative grant for \$3 million.

Mr. Dumais said that he isn't aware of a specific deadline. The State wants to award this grant money.

Ms. Russo said that it is her understanding that part of the \$3 million is used to prepare the RFP. Once you sign, you are promising you are going to go out to bid. There is a second round of applications due in August of this year. She is concerned about the timeline.

Mr. Stirling said that a definitive process is needed.

Mr. Dumais said that it isn't clear what happens if we spend the money to prepare the RFP and elect not to move forward. There is a question of having to repay the money.

Ms. Russo said that after reading through the information, she believes that once we agree to move forward with the RFP, we will lose control of this process. After 20 years, we can have the equipment taken away.

It was noted that economic answers won't come in until after the RFP.

Mr. Stirling noted that even if this presents a good financial deal, it's hard to justify going so far outside our educational mission.

Mr. Horwitz questioned the infrastructure needed to capture the heat that the plant would produce.

Mr. Dumais said that he doesn't know the answer to Mr. Horwitz' question.

Mr. Stirling said that the chief advantage appears to be the value of a tri-town emergency shelter at the High School and in the Woodbridge center.

Ms. Russo said that the tri-town emergency shelter doesn't seem like the most persuasive argument. During an outage, many people wouldn't be able to get to the High School. It might make sense to have a very efficient generator here.

Mr. DeMaio said that the cost of the generator that we would like to have is approximately \$400,000. This has been in the capital plan for some time. He questioned whether we are closer to technology advancements that would make solar power panels smaller.

Mr. Horwitz said that having emergency power at the High School is very attractive to a lot of people who live nearby. Those living too far away to benefit

would likely have a different perspective. Residents of Woodbridge have experienced a number of power outages.

Mr. DeMaio questioned whether having a MicroGrid here would expedite work to restore power here.

Ms. Russo said that if Woodbridge truly needs this, then we need to consider it.

Mr. Horwitz noted that the High School was able to be open to the public for use of the locker room showers after a storm. Power was restored at the High School within 24 hours, while homes in the area were without power for days.

The Committee members agreed that more information is needed at this time. The Committee would like to meet with Facilities Director Jim Saisa, the Woodbridge town attorney and representatives for Weston and Sampson. Ms. Russo said that she would like to speak with someone at Yale to get an objective opinion as to the direction that power is going.

Mr. Stirling noted that the next regular Board of Education meeting is on June 9th. There is no deadline to approve this before then. We have until then to create a report.

Mr. DeMaio said that the Board will want to see some type of progress on this.

Ms. Russo said that she will begin a draft report and start collecting documents.

A meeting will take place next week. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 27th in Branford. A few people have been invited, including representatives from Weston and Sampson and Attorney Paul Michaud. If any member of the Board would like to come, they are welcome. Ms. Russo said that she would like to speak to someone from Branford High School who has experience with this.

Mr. Dumais noted that Attorney Michaud can answer questions about the power purchase agreement. Mr. Dumais said that we might be able to get written answers to our questions.

Mr. Horwitz noted that he would like to know why this would be good for Amity. A meeting was tentatively scheduled for Thursday, May 22nd at 5:30 p.m. A meeting was tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, June 4th.

3. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marianne Lippard, recording clerk