Clean Energy Ad Hoc Committee Minutes 12/14/20

Attending: D Bercury-McCarthy, S Huttner, W Horne, S McCarthy, G Ames, E Mahler, R Babcock, J Prins, E Cahill, D Rabin. Absent: M Cox. Guest: Chris Herb

1.Approve minutes of 11/23/20: J Prins moved to approve the minutes, D Rabin seconded the motion and it was approved without dissent. D Rabin was tasked with recording the current minutes.
2.Electric Vehicles: S Huttner reported that this is the last week of the EV training series and that the completion certificate will earn Sustainable CT credits for the town. The focus of the series is how town entities can prepare for EVs. Sharon has received a positive response in her dealings with Branford town officials.
3.HeatSmart update: D Rabin reported that there were approximately 240 responses to the HeatSmart campaign. Many came from the web site but the HES and heat pump providers are also entering inquiries into our tracking sheet. Dan also reported that the fund-raising effort has exceeded its goal and that we are currently working on other outreach efforts such as a banner across Main St.
4.Biofuels: Chris Herb, President of the CT Energy Marketers Association (CEMA), a trade group of businesses that sell deliverable fuel (motor and heating fuels). Approximately half the homes in CT heat with deliverable fuel, predominantly oil. Chris spoke about biodiesel, fuel derived from biomass. In CT this is mostly sourced from recycled oil and grease from restaurants, cafeterias, doughnut shops, etc. New Haven is home to the largest processing plant in the Northeast, American Green Fuels. In other parts of the country biodiesel comes from soybean and canola oil, byproducts of animal feed production.
Chris pointed out several advantages of biodiesel compared with other fuels. Cleaner fuel results in less build-up in burners, leading to lower maintenance costs, less pollution, and more efficient heat transfer. He said that a life cycle comparison of biodiesel with natural gas (NG) shows pollutant equivalence at the 1.7% level (blend of 1.7 parts bio-derived fuel and 98.3% extracted oil). Thus 2% biodiesel blend is cleaner than NG. This analysis includes leakage of NG into the atmosphere, estimated at 313 metric tons annually in CT. Methane is the major constituent of NG and is a potent greenhouse gas (GHG). Both biodiesel and NG generate CO2, another GHG, during combustion. NG is used to generate approximately 58% of grid electricity in CT.
A CEMA goal is to achieve a 50% biodiesel blend (B50). Homeowners using biodiesel should not have to make alterations in their equipment up to the B20 level. In response to a question, Chris said that CEMA believes that biodiesel will not only be a transition fuel during the growth of renewable electricity generation, but that it will be a permanent part of CT's energy profile. The CT state goal of reducing GHG emissions to 80% below the 2001 level by 2050 can be achieved with biodiesel in the mix. He said that ethyl levulinate is an experimental additive that may have a negative carbon effect and help offset traditional combustion chemistry. D Rabin requested more information on this process.
5. Public Comment: Members of the public asked questions and made comments.
6. E Mahler motioned that the meeting adjourn, it was seconded by D Rabin and the motion was approved.