CONSERVATION, ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Thursday, February 13, 2020 – Bloomfield Town Hall – Conference Room #2, 1st floor
MINUTES

I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. Members Present: Zellene Sandler, Charlie Horn, Seth Pitts, Val Rossetti, Paula Jones

III. Approval of Agenda: The agenda was approved. Note that the agenda was re-ordered to accommodate the power point presentation set-up.

IV. Approval of January 9, 2020 Minutes: Minutes of the January meeting were approved.

V. Legislative Update: The CT League of Conservation Voters website was recommended as a good way to track environment-related legislation. [https://www.ctlcv.org/watchlist-936231.html](https://www.ctlcv.org/watchlist-936231.html) Briefing papers can be found at: [https://www.ctlcv.org/briefing-papers.html](https://www.ctlcv.org/briefing-papers.html)

Among the proposals likely to be raised this session are:

Modernizing Connecticut’s bottle bill by: increasing the handling fees paid to redemption centers & authorized retailers for each container collected; expanding the deposit law to cover non-carbonized beverages, wine & liquor bottles; and raising the deposit value to at least 10 cents on covered containers.

Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS): The Governor’s PFAS task force recommended statewide PFAS testing and pollution cleanup. Both the Environment and Public Health Committees of the CGA are contemplating action to approve significant PFAS legislation this year. Funding will be sought for establishing testing capacity in CT, especially for fish and for developing a state drinking water standard that is protective of the public health. The cost will be several million dollars. DEEP recently Okayed fish taken from affected waterways, in moderation and no more than once a month.

Municipal Funding Option to assist towns to preserve open space. It would establish a dedicated fund to acquire, preserve, and steward open space, water resources, and farmland at the local level by enacting a conveyance fee of up to 1% paid by buyers of real property over $150,000 in value.

Legislative proposals are also expected on Community Choice Aggregation (see more below), single-use plastic, polystyrenes, and many other wildlife, conservation, energy and environmental issues.

Zellene stated that federally there are attempts to weaken the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act by reducing or eliminating penalties to companies who harm migratory birds.

VI. Community Choice Aggregation: Peter Millman of Eastern Connecticut Green Action and a PACE Board member gave a presentation on Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) for the purchase of energy. CCA is a way for a community to buy bulk power for its residents, businesses, and municipal accounts, while still receiving transmission and distribution service from the existing utility. This can enable lower energy bills for town residents, and provides an option for renewable energy, which would have positive environmental impacts. Nine states, including all of CT’s neighbors, have already passed enabling
legislation to allow for CCAs. Legislation to authorize CCAs in CT is going to be introduced this session in the CT General Assembly. Peter will send a draft resolution that would ask the Town Council to support CCA enabling legislation. Further actions would include sending a message to the state legislature, and speaking to our Town Council.

VII. Net Zero Energy in Schools: Charlie Horn attended a conference on Net Zero Energy in Schools. This program is one of a new series sponsored by the CT Energy Network/Clean Water Fund and PACE for town energy task force members. Speakers included John Balfe from Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships and a number of contractors specializing in high efficiency HVAC systems. Fairfield presented its progress in solar installations on school rooftops, parking lots and EV charging stations. A clear takeaway message was to work to get energy efficiency and solar incorporated into the earliest plan and design stages. One of the many benefits of electrifying and solarizing schools is the educational component, teaching children about energy conservation and renewable energy.

VIII. Projects from Facilitated Discussion of CEEC Priorities: The committee discussed the top priorities for the CEEC and narrowed them to a few that the committee could focus on for this year. Recycling/composting and solar panels on town buildings were selected as top priorities. Tree planting and Pollinator Pathways were also mentioned. The town is currently interviewing for an environmental planner and the planner will be tasked with working on several of the topics that are of interest to the committee, including pursuing the achievement of “silver” status for the Sustainability CT Program.

A new law is being proposed regarding recycling of organics, CGS sec. 22a-226e. Blue Earth is a company that currently provides organic recycling to homeowners. We discussed inviting DEEP to come to speak to CEEC in April and Blue Earth to come to speak at the CEEC at a future meeting, possibly in May, with a program on recycling/composting at Prosser in June.

IX. Old Business:

• Update on High-Volume Water User discounts: Paula Jones lead the discussion of MDC’s potential 20% water discount and 75% clean water project discount for Niagara bottling, the only company that qualifies for the quantity discounts. This plan offers no drought protection for residents, who have also been burdened with a 13% increase in water bills. On Feb. 24th at 6:30 there will be a public hearing at the MDC Operations Facility & Training Center, 125 Maxim Rd., in Hartford, for the public to voice concerns.

• Earthlight/Homestead/C-TEC update for Bloomfield Fuel Bank: Charlie Horn followed up with Homestead and Earthlight on the “give-back” for their HES and solar business in 2019 and checks for $225 (Homestead) and $200 (Earthlight) have been sent to the Town Manager’s office and will be used for the Bloomfield Fuel Bank. Many attempts to reach C-TEC Solar by email and phone have been unsuccessful.

• Shred Day/Electronics Recycling: Shred Day/Electronics Recycling Day is confirmed for Saturday, October 3, from 9 to 1 at Town Hall. Both Shred-It and Take2Recycling are willing to assist the Town and CEEC under the same terms as the last event.

X. New Business:
Quarterly Report: The next update from CEEC is due on February 28. Val will submit a paragraph on recycling. Other topics will include HES now available for $75 for all fuel sources: highlight the fuel bank donation, CEEC’s priority projects.

Status of environmental planner: The town is currently interviewing for an environmental planner.

XI. Public Comments:

Charlie Horn asked Robert Ike, the Bloomfield Republic Town Committee Chair to assist with CEEC membership recruitment and he responded he was doing this already.

Paula Jones mentioned that the town of Vernon, a Silver Sustainable CT town, has a policy of giving out a reusable water bottle to be filled from the filtered taps (like what Bloomfield buildings have) to visitors instead of a single-use water bottle. The reusable bottles have the Sustainable CT logo and the branding, ”Creating and Maintaining a Sustainable Vernon”. CEEC will place this item on the March agenda and discuss working with the administration to propose a similar policy for Bloomfield.

Susan Miller stated that the town of Windsor has a new commission on energy. They will share their best practices with the CEEC. On April 1, the Windsor Climate Action group will host a forum with Rep. Bobby Gibson.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is on February 14 through 16th.

XII. Next Meeting Date: The next meeting will be March 12, 2020.

XIII. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 9:07 PM