

TOWN OF SOUTHTON
ENERGY COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting
March 16, 2009

The regular meeting of the Energy Committee of the Town of Southington was held on March 16, 2009 in the Town Council Chambers at the Town Hall, 75 Main Street, Southington, CT. The meeting was called to order at 7:15 PM by Councilman David Zoni, Chairperson.

I. Roll Call

Sharon Vocke, Jerry Belanger, Dennis Vachon, Councilman Nicholas DePaola, and Councilman David Zoni, Chairman. A quorum is determined.

Councilman David Zoni, assuming the chair:

II. Approval of Minutes for February 18, 2009

A motion was made by Mr. Belanger to approve the February 18, 2009 minutes, and seconded by Mr. Vachon. The motion was approved on a voice vote.

III. Energy Committee Communications

Mr. Vachon provided a copy to each committee member of the information packet he obtained from the *CL&P and Yankee Gas Large Commercial, Industrial & Municipal Customer Meeting* he attended in Farmington, February 10, 2009. The packet included the slide presentation from the meeting, and vendor handouts.

Police and Fire Representatives (Guest Speakers)

The committee invited Buddy Clark, Southington's Fire Chief, and Sgt. Lowell Depalma from the Southington Police Department, to speak with the committee regarding safety concerns resulting from reduced lighting and other energy initiatives.

Buddy stated that in the view of the fire department, good lighting in municipal buildings, or any building, is important for security. The fire service needs at least some lighting at doorways, staircases and hallways ... a total blackout in those areas would not be wise. But, we do know how to operate a light switch, so minimal lighting is sufficient for our purposes. Lighting does deter some criminal activity though, especially pertaining to arson.

The fire department buildings have been involved in energy savings/conservation activities. One employee has offered to take courses in this area in order to

expand the conservation effort. We're looking at small projects in the buildings in order to save energy, and we're making progress.

A question was asked by committee members in regards to the lights that illuminate some of the fire department buildings/parking lots. Some of those lights are attached to CL&P light poles and the committee questions if those lights are part of the CL&P lighting program. It is Buddy's understanding that the lights are part of the program ... no additional cost is incurred to keep those lights illuminated.

Sgt. Depalma explained that his main focus is crime prevention, and good lighting is the #1 crime prevention tool. He provided a white paper developed by the American Crime Prevention Institute entitled "Lighting and Lighting Systems". He explained this was an excellent document that goes into great detail regarding how to use lighting systems to deter crime. He pointed out that the very first paragraph sums up pretty much anything he could tell us regarding this topic:

"Lighting has been used as a means for preventing crime since the dawn of time. Properly applied lighting promotes the positive use of space, reduces fear (real or perceived) and increases natural surveillance. Its value lies in its intrinsic ability to deny camouflage. It denies the would-be assailant the ability to hide from his potential victim and permits his detection by passerby or by patrolling police. Additionally, potential criminals working in well-lit areas perceive that detection is imminent – or at a minimum possible – and so may choose to avoid the circumstance altogether."

Sgt. Depalma went on to explain that when looking at a building's lighting systems, or when looking at how lights are used in a building, it's always best to first ask a simple question, "Why are you lighting your building the way you are?" Often the perception is that a particular light is needed for safety reasons, however you find that when you ask this question, many lights really don't need to be left on. We can help the building owner/operator determine that.

Sgt. Depalma explained the definition of and differences between "interior", "exterior" and "perimeter" lighting. Interior lighting is any lighting inside a building. Exterior lighting is lighting that illuminates the immediate outside area of a building. Perimeter lighting illuminates areas beyond the exterior of the building. Each area has different lighting needs in order to work as crime deterrents.

Lighting a building's perimeter is not as effective as lighting its exterior. The ideal type of exterior lighting is when the fixture is placed on a pole away from the building shining towards the building, rather than a fixture attached to the building that shines away from the building. The idea is to prevent areas where a perpetrator can remain hidden.

The committee asked about technology that could be used to assist with both energy conservation and safety. Sgt. Depalma commented that lights with photo/motion sensors are good. Areas are then illuminated when they need to be. Councilman Depaola asked if there was a way to combine technologies like photo/motion sensors and cameras. Sgt. Depalma explained that those can work, however a lot depends on the type of lighting in the area and the types of cameras that are used. Often, the return on investment for these systems is questionable, and you really don't need to spend a lot of money to have both safety and energy efficiency. Just looking at the building and providing common sense options can be equally effective.

Councilman Zoni commented that "going black", while very energy efficient, is obviously not prudent since it would cause safety and other issues. That's not the goal of this committee – we are looking to use "optimal" standards for lighting where possible. Sgt. Depalma agreed ... we never want to "go black" on a town building.

Councilman Depaola added that liability could also be an issue when trying to reduce lighting. For instance, swimming pools probably have more lighting requirements than a building. Insurance companies and town laws may have differing views on when, and how much, lighting should be provided for a town pool. The height of fencing around a pool and how/when it is locked, would also determine the lighting needs.

Committee members asked Sgt. Depalma if the high energy use issue with the new police building has been resolved. Apparently when the building went online it was using more energy than planned. The new building is much larger than the Holcomb building, which accounts for some of the increased energy use. In addition, the HVAC/control systems needed some adjustment. The building is now working as designed.

The committee members thanked Fire Chief Clark and Sergeant Depalma for speaking with the committee.

IV. Issues for Discussion and Review

a) Update on the 20% by 2010 Campaign

Patrice Gillespie of the Sierra Club has agreed to speak with the committee at our April meeting. Mr. Belanger will be participating in a webinar sponsored by the CT Clean Energy Fund. The webinar is a requirement for town representatives to attend before the town can accept grant money that is available to promote the 20% by 2010 campaign.

b) Public Building and Facilities Energy Conservation

Mr. Tranquillo continues to work on these issues. Since he is was not present at this meeting the committee will get an update during the April meeting.

c) EPA Energy Challenge Program

Ms. Vocke stated the need for more information on our buildings including a history of energy usage at each building as well as energy costs. This information is critical in order to apply to the program. Councilman Zoni stated that town employees will provide that information to us for town buildings, but right now they are pretty busy with the budget. School buildings should be a little easier since they've been going through energy audits as part of their conservation efforts. He will keep on it. Councilman Depaola commented that we couldn't forget the "human factor" in whatever studies we conduct or energy conservation plans we implement. The plans are only as good as the people implementing and using them.

d) KVAR/Capacitance Devices

Mr. Tranquillo is still looking into this.

e) Rescue-A-Buck Energy Suggestions

No new suggestions have been submitted that pertain to energy savings.

V. Public Communications

Arthur Cyr, 103 Berlin Avenue. Mr. Cyr wanted to update the committee on a few issues that were being discussed.

KVAR capacitance devices do work, but only for older equipment/motors. Newer equipment/motors (produced in the last 10 years or so) are already highly energy efficient, so these KVAR devices will not help with these newer motors.

At the last Town Council meeting, the Plantsville/South End Building Committee updated the Council on the progress of the building projects. He wanted to ask that committee whether or not lighting in the hallways of the new buildings would be on separate switches. Unlike the other schools, he hopes the hallway lights can be turned on/off independent of other areas/rooms within the building. Mr. Belanger stated that he is a member of that building committee and he will ask that question at the next meeting.

Regarding swimming pools, it is his understanding that if you have at least a 6-foot high fence with a locked gate, then you do not have to keep a pool illuminated when not in use. However, nothing is guaranteed – just because you are following code doesn't mean you won't be sued anyway.

Hatton School is routinely lit up like a Christmas tree at night. The exterior lights are so bright that the neighbor's houses around the school are lit up as well – these

lights obviously do not have cut-offs/shields. Councilman Zoni stated he would contact Fred Cox regarding this issue.

Regarding the “50% Street Lighting Standard”, he explained that this means roughly every other street light is turned off. Obviously, street light spacing affects which lights are turned off, and hills and curves have different lighting needs than straight runs. This is basically what our town is doing already. We can’t turn off many more lights without affecting safety.

The committee thanked Art for his input.

VI. Miscellaneous Business

Related to the issue Mr. Cyr raised regarding the new school construction, committee members discussed what kinds of energy conservation steps were being included in the construction. Mr. Belanger explained that the architects developed the pre-referendum specifications for the buildings before LEED Silver requirements for new construction were in place. Once the referendum was approved, trying to make the buildings adhere to LEED certification would have added to the construction costs. Regardless, the buildings are being built with energy efficiency in mind. Heating systems are gas powered and 90% efficient; lighting systems are energy efficient; buildings are being wired to more easily accept solar panels in the future. Councilman Zoni commented that our bonding for the building projects does not prevent us from using grant money to pursue additional energy efficiency projects for the buildings. Mr. Belanger responded that a separate building committee might have to take on those kinds of additional projects, since that is beyond the scope of the building committee currently in place.

VII. Adjournment

Mr. Belanger made a motion to adjourn at 8:25 PM, seconded by Mr. Vachon. All were in favor of adjournment.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jerry Belanger
Committee Member
Energy Committee
Town of Southington