

Village District of Eastman
Commissioners' Meeting, May 6, 2015
PUBLIC SESSION, FINAL MINUTES

In attendance: Commissioner Duncan Wood, Commissioner William Sullivan, Commissioner Robert Fairweather, Treasurer David Wright, Operations Manager Tim Hicks and Business Manager Amy Lewis.

The meeting was called to order at 1:58PM.

Commissioner Wood moved to reappoint John Macdonald as deputy treasurer for 2015. Commissioner Fairweather seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer Wright was sworn in for another term by BM Lewis.

The purpose of the meeting was to review the proposal submitted by ReVision Energy for the wellfield solar array. Commissioner Wood shared his disappointment with the proposal, as it did not provide the expected benefit to the VDE.

Treasurer Wright was also displeased with the proposal, in that it assumes more of a rate hike with Eversource as what has happened historically, according to the research he has completed.

Joining the meeting at 2:37: Jack Ruderman and Sam Lavallee of ReVision Energy, and Hugh Scott of IGS, LLC.

Commissioner Wood gave a brief summary of the process leading to the decision to possibly install a solar array on the wellfield. He explained the issues the VDE board had with the ReVision proposal as presented, given the current market uncertainty and public views on the natural gas/alternative energy options available now and in the near future.

Ruderman cited examples of other towns that had raised similar concerns, stating that the difference between the initial low return v. "startup" cost was negligible, and that savings would increase over time.

Scott gave the history of IGS, LLC as an investor of solar energy projects, most recently in New England. He did admit that the escalator given in the proposal was incorrect, resulting in inaccurate forecasts of proposed savings to the VDE.

Discussion on how to reduce the overall cost was made: how much of the install/excavation could be done in-house; would the existing fence and gate around the wellfield as source protection be enough to satisfy the fencing requirement around the solar panels, and so forth. The issue with the fencing would be that the wetlands would potentially be impacted should additional fencing be necessary, as given in the proposal.

Ruderman did say that with the current NH House of Representatives, there is a very high likelihood of alternative energy incentives being dropped from the state budget; there may not be funds available for alternative energy projects should this particular one be pushed out.

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Commissioner Wood asked about potential property tax: as a municipality, the VDE does not pay tax to the town of Springfield; should the array be installed, would that create taxable property? Who would be responsible?

Scott was unsure of New Hampshire precedent; he stated that in Massachusetts, a municipality would typically give payment in lieu of tax, rather than pay an actual property tax. Lavallee added that there were several tax-exempt schools in the area that were working with ReVision; he and Ruderman would look into the tax situation.

Scott said that IGS would fully insure the system once installed; VDE would only need a rider for liability purposes.

Lavallee added that ReVision encourages clients to contract with them for maintenance of the system, once purchased.

With a 3% escalator, the estimated savings would be roughly \$125,000 over 7 years.

Commissioner Wood asked for a revised proposal incorporating the discussed changes. Other solar energy contractors have been approached by the VDE, and comparison will be made between each contractor. He asked if Scott would like to visit the wellfield to see how the array would work on the site; at 3:40 Scott, Lavallee and Ruderman exited the meeting with OM Hicks.

With nothing further to discuss on the solar, the board requested a non-public session for the purpose of discussing the hiring of public employees, per NHRSA 91A:3,II(b). By roll, the board unanimously entered executive session at 3:45.

The board returned to public session at 4:00.

The VDE dinner will be at the Back Side Inn on May 22; staff, officials and significant others are welcome. This is an informal/casual get-together.

Commissioner Wood will look into other potential solar contractors to compare against the expected revised proposal from ReVision.

With nothing further, the meeting closed at 4:03.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Lewis
Business Manager
Village District of Eastman