

Town of Coventry
School Building and Energy Efficiency Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 2, 2023 6:30 PM
Town Hall Annex & Zoom Meeting

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Mary Kortmann at 6:31 PM.

Members Present: Mary Kortmann (remote), Jennifer Reilly (remote), Julie Castillo (remote), Joe Malon (remote), Mike Soucy (remote).

Also present: John Elsesser-Town Manager, Amanda Backhaus-Town of Coventry Finance Director (remote), Rusty Malik of QA&M (remote), Bob Carroll-Town of Coventry (remote).

2. Approval of Minutes:

a. December 1, 2022:

Motion: I move to approve the minutes from December 1, 2022.

By: Castillo Seconded: Reilly

Discussion/Edits: None

Vote: Unanimously in favor

3. School Roof Update:

Malik informed that we are waiting until the Summer to do the next phase of the project. As far as he is aware, all last-minute items were taken care of, but is waiting on one more report. In the Summer, they will make sure the contractors are on-site, and noted depending on the status of the HVAC project, we may have to do some coordination with contractors. Elsesser commented that all materials for the project should be in stock and we have already paid for them, Malik agreed.

Kortmann asked for confirmation that we do not have any outstanding invoices for the contractors. Malik stated that should be correct.

4. Unit ventilator/HVAC Project Update:

Elsesser informed that him, Backhaus and Malik had a meeting about how this project would work out. The recommendation at this time is to make sure ICDS gets moving and is ready to go out to bid for the unit ventilators, and for the roof tie ins to be done in the Summer. Once we find out about the grant, we want to get going on it quickly. He noted it was likely this would not be done all in one year due to supply chain and work issues. It's being proposed to be done in two pieces. First the unit ventilators and roof vents, and then next Summer, we would do the air chilling/air conditioning and DOAS work tying it into the roof venting.

Kortmann asked if it would run, and Elsesser confirmed. He also explained that this was the original plan, but with the DOAS we will have a little more control and efficiency.

Malik informed that the grant decisions will be coming out in March now. Once we find out the grant status, we will move forward with the unit ventilators and request a 2-stage approach with the state. First phase PCR (plan completion review) will be for the unit ventilators. We will notify the state that it took so long for the grant information to come out, and we will still have to work on the design for the second phase (DOAS units, etc.). That second PCR will go in once the drawings for phase 2 are completed. He expects this to take about 3 or 4 months, and hopes that this will allow some time for the equipment to come in. He added that if it turns out, we don't get the grant, we will just bid out phase 1 as initially planned, and not go out for phase 2. At that point, we would not even start the design of phase 2.

Kortmann questioned what a PCR is. Malik informed it is a planned completion test, that we have to submit to the state. This was done for the roof project, and will be required for the HVAC project as well. It is essentially a plan review. Carroll explained that the state goes through all the drawings and they ask several questions, which takes several hours.

Elsesser explained that another option is we don't do anything this year, and wait to do it all next Summer. He noted that if it was done now, it would improve the air quality and be quieter. Doing the entirety of the project in one Summer is daunting. Rusty added that there would be economy of scale as a benefit, but agreed it is a lot to do in one Summer.

Kortmann discussed that she liked the 2-phase project, over doing it all at once. Malik noted that one disadvantage of this, is since both phases have to go out to bid, we may get different contractors for each phase. There will be additional costs, with a second set of bids as well as cost escalation with the passing of time. He further explained that waiting for the grant, and to get some work done this Summer, that the 2-phase approach is better.

Kortmann asked if there would be any inside the building/classroom work a part of phase 2. Elsesser informed no. She asked for confirmation that all work inside the high school would be done. Elsesser and Malik discussed that the remainder of the work would be from the roof. Malik also noted that if anything needs to be connected, the contractors should be able to take care of that ahead of time, during phase 1. Elsesser commented that the contractor may give a lower bid on phase 2, so that they can keep working.

Reilly asked for clarification regarding the 2 phases and design work, and that 2 phases would allow more time on the design work and flexibility with changes depending on the grant outcome. Malik confirmed and explained that ICDS is doing the design work and should be ready to go to bid on phase 1 in April should we hear on the grant status in March. If the designs were done for both phases together, it would take longer. Elsesser informed that ICDS has not started any design on phase 2, and that it is only conceptual at this point, but are 95% done with the unit ventilator designs that would be done in phase 1. This means that they could be out to bid in a month's time. The phase 2 designs would take a long time. Reilly stated there would be no point designing it, if we don't know about the grant yet, Elsesser agreed. Elsesser also mentioned that we have instructed them to move forward, as if we were not getting the grant, and there will be no conflict with adding the second phase in later. However, we do not want to spend money on something we may never get.

Malik explained that we can also reevaluate once we get closer, and the design work is done and we have the go ahead from the state. If we are close to the Summer, and we do not have materials, then we could push it to the following Summer and do it as a 1 phase construction at that point. Reilly asked if we did 2 phases, and more incentives came available, would we be able to capitalize on those during the second phase. Malik expressed that its possible. Elsesser also explained the bigger units have other aspects to them, which takes time for decision making etc., meaning that those could not be installed this Summer.

Malon asked if we did this in 1 phase next year, if we would need to hold the roofers off as well. Elsesser explained no. Based on the designs, the equipment going into the roof will be used as part of the other air conditioning system, and they would attach to the unit ventilators. If we end up doing the air chilling and DOAS, they can be tied in at a later time. There would be minor modifications to the equipment, but no additional construction on the roof.

Soucy questioned when would we be bidding out the second phase, if we went with that approach. Malik informed that once we hear if we get the grant, we will inform ICDS to start the design work. He is unsure how many months that will take. He explained if it takes about 3 or 4 months to complete the design and finish the review with the state, phase 2 can go out to bid in July/August 2023 for an install in the Summer of 2024. Elsesser noted the big equipment that just needs to be put in with a crane, may be able to be done sooner if the equipment is available, as the install for these are not too intrusive for the school. The main issue is if they are available through the supply chain. This way they can be installed more quickly, instead of waiting until next Summer.

Kortmann questioned if there would be any financial downsides to doing the big equipment in their own phase. Elsesser expressed it isn't necessary. He informed that we can always inform the awarded contractor if the equipment is in earlier, and they could start this part of the work sooner, if their schedule allows. He noted that they will plan for delays and such, so getting work done ahead of time could be beneficial for both parties. Especially since the work is exterior.

Kortmann had concerns about the existing units failing, and having equipment not being hooked up until the following Summer. She added that they will need to be replaced, as planned for in the capital budget because they are about to fail. Elsesser informed that there are no additional funds approved from the Town Council or the public for this work. He added that the fastest route would be the 2-phases approach. He further explained that any work set for phase 2 could be done earlier if able and allowed by the Board of Education. He felt that all the air conditioning should go out to bid together, so it remains with only one vendor. This will eliminate problems with warranties, like we may have, if we had 2 vendors.

Soucy added concerns with ordering equipment for phase 2 around September this year, after the bid is awarded. He informed that with about 80% of the projects he is seeing, equipment is about a year out. Elsesser agreed, but felt the unit ventilators will be available, but is not sure with the other equipment. He explained that the goal is to tie the unit ventilators into the roof work that will most likely be starting mid-June, which is the whole point of the 2-phase project. If we wait until Summer 2024 for both phase constructions, we will have 2 contractors working over each other, as well as other issues.

Malik informed that depending on the approach, we will have to revisit what the next phase will entail regarding to roofing. He noted, if we delay everything to the following year, we will need to look at the implications to the roof itself. He explained it wouldn't be a huge change, but the duct work would need to be blocked off, and they will need to figure out what to do with the existing unit and exhaust. We will have to reevaluate leaving it in place, and replacing it at a later date with the roofers gone and roof work complete.

Reilly questioned who the PCR reports go to. Malik informed that the PCR is actually a test, where all documents are submitted to the state. The state reviews, and once we meet all their criteria, we will receive a letter from the state indicating we are eligible to go out to bid. He explained that if we went out to bid prior to receiving the letter, we would be jeopardizing our reimbursement. He also confirmed that if we did 2 phases, we would need 2 PCTs/PCRs. He added that this would only be done once we were notified, we were awarded the grant. Reilly stated that it seemed like we would have delays getting work off the ground this Summer. Elsesser informed that if we do not get the grant, we will only do the one PCT and be done. Kortmann asked if we would even need to do the PCT if we don't get the grant as we would be paying for it ourselves. Malik informed you wouldn't need to, as we would not be using the state funding, and could just move forward with the project.

Reilly questioned the increased cost with going out to bid, and if they are substantial. Malik informed they are minor costs with advertising, document printing, etc. It's a repetitive cost from phase 1, since we are doing it a second time. We would also need to go through the plan review test (PCT) twice as well, and they will ask we supply the same documents, but will need additional phasing letters. These are only slight modifications. Malik feels the biggest cost would be that we would have 2 different contractors, and they would be mobilizing at different times which would lead to additional costs based on general conditions associated with construction.

Elsesser stressed that he does not think we would be able to do both constructions in 1 phase, over one Summer. Reilly agreed and felt it would be too risky. She added if something went wrong, we would have no buffer. Soucy agreed that if we had the funds for the first phase, there would be no point in putting off the work. Castillo agreed, as long as the school was able to open. **The group consensus was to have the work done in 2 phases.**

a. HVAC Grant:

Grant information is still pending. As Malik informed earlier, we should be hearing the status on whether we were awarded the grant or not sometime in March. Originally, we were supposed to be notified in January, then it was pushed to February, and now it is March. As soon as we hear, we will be ready to move forward with the project.

Kortmann brought up other matters to be discussed and questioned if there was a contract for the solar project. Carroll informed we might, and that the attorneys met yesterday and seemed to come to terms. He noted it is on the BOE's agenda for approval at their next meeting. Reilly questioned where the solar would be put. Carroll and Kortmann confirmed it would be installed on the part of the high school roof that was finished. Carroll informed this work was approved about a year ago. Carroll informed that at the meeting, the BOE will be approving the purchase order from Greenskies. Reilly confirmed this was the company associated with the microgrid. Reilly and Carroll discussed that the cost from the PPAs were the same (7.5 cents/kilowatt hour), and only the legal language was changed in the document.

Elsesser updated the committee on the microgrid, and that Greenskies has made an offer to buy out Coventry Solar LLC, or partner with them. This means they would take over the \$4M grant. They have also done some initial design work that would change the microgrid wiring significantly. It would cost a bit more, but would be safer. The wiring would use a circular route, over a direct one from point to point. This would make for more redundancy if something goes wrong with underground wiring, allowing them to back feed it a different way. They would also reduce the number of gas fired units to generate electricity, and use a little bit more solar, including those on the roof. The solar energy would be incorporated into their supply. They would also look at replacing a generator at the high school as supplemental power with a gas-powered generator. These would be improvements to the microgrid plan. Greenskies has experience with running microgrids, and have better attorneys. He added that sometime soon, all the attorneys will need to get together (Greenskies, Town of Coventry, Orchard Hills), to go over this and come to an agreement on the microgrid, which the solar would be a part of.

Elsesser added that the town has also applied for a BRIC grant (Building Resiliency), through FEMA that we should hear back on relatively soon. This grant would cover the underground wiring, including replacing the wiring for the housing authority and replacing transformers. This would be matched by the DEEP grant. This money will reduce the total microgrid costs. This project is looking strong, and we want to get all the parties to start looking at it again.

Reilly questioned that the solar on the high school would be tied into the microgrid, but the other solar in town would stay separate, Elsesser confirmed as we have separate contracts with them. Castillo asked if the Rec contract was with Earthlight. Elsesser informed it was originally with Tim Sadler, who worked for Earthlight,

but it was with him individually. Carroll added the thought is that it would be sold to Greenskies eventually. Elsesser informed that microgrid or not, Greenskies wants that solar contract. Reilly asked if it would be sold to them. Castillo didn't think it would be sold, but the contract could be assigned to Greenskies. She also mentioned that the extension expires April 1st, so an additional extension request would need to be sent to PIRA. Kortmann explained they would need to wait until it was closer to the expiration date as originally the double extension was requested and it was not approved. PIRA informed them to come back when it got closer to expiring. She also explained that they are supposed to be able to tell them that all the panels are up, but we are waiting on the final gear for connectivity that had a long lead time, at that point.

Reilly questioned the amount going onto the high school. Carroll informed that we will be putting around 275 megawatts on the high school at this time. Elsesser noted that is more than the high school needs.

Elsesser informed that the DEEP wrote a letter of endorsement to the State Department of Emergency and Homeland Security to support our microgrid BRIC grant, meaning they want this project to move forward. Reilly explained she thinks we are in good standing, and that when she looked recently, there were only 3 applications for this in the State of CT. Elsesser noted that the state has \$2M to assign, and they could always ask us to take less. He also added that his intern was able to make the cost/benefit analysis show that there is a significant return on investment. Reilly asked if they have come back and asked any questions yet. Elsesser informed there were 3 questions so far, 2 of which were simple things. The 3rd item was to look at other solutions, that would make this beneficial. He explained it took about a week's time to do this and was really informative. All things aside, he believes we have a really good application.

Reilly also mentioned that if anyone was looking to volunteer on additional committees, the Energy Committee has some openings, and they can submit a statement of interest and contact Lori Tollman at the Town Hall. Elsesser added they should spread the word to anyone they think would be interested. Castillo explained she was going to look into it, as it may suit her better, and she may have more use to that committee. Backhaus agreed with her, and felt that she could do good work on that committee, but wants her to stay on SBEEC as well. Castillo seemed happy to be on both committees. Kortmann noted that committee should work on tax incentives for home owners as it is currently not clear. Elsesser noted that the Greenskies solar will qualify for all sorts of federal tax credits out of the new laws.

Reilly commented that we don't know the cost for the microgrid electricity yet, and it seems the original number has fluctuated. Elsesser informed that it will still need to be discussed, as they are looking at a whole new design, but they are aware we don't want to pay any more now. We may need to look at the possibility of paying more to be online all the time, as the generators cannot run the buildings fully.

5. Adjournment:

Motion made to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 PM by Reilly. Motion seconded by Malon and passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicole Archambault

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Minutes Clerk

Please Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the School Building and Energy Efficiency Committee at the next School Building and Energy Efficiency Committee meeting. Please see subsequent meeting for approval or changes to these minutes.