



Operations Committee - Board of Representatives

Jonathan Jacobson, Chair

John Zelinsky, Jr., Vice Chair

Committee Report

Date: Tuesday, February 23, 2021
Time: 6:30pm
Place: This meeting was held remotely

The Operations Committee met as indicated above. In attendance were Chair Jacobson, Vice Chair Zelinsky and Committee Member Reps. Adams, Coleman, Curtis, Lee, Mahoney, Sherwood and Watkins. Also present were Reps. Stella and McMullen; Mark McGrath, Director of Operations; Michael Pollard, Chief of Staff; Cynthia Anger, Law Dept.; Bill Brink and Rhudean Bull, WPCA; Ted Jankowski, Director of Public Safety, Health & Welfare, and two members of the public.

Chair Jacobson called the meeting to order at 6:33pm.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
¹ 4. O30.081	RESOLUTION; In Favor of Creating a Solarize Stamford Program. 01/06/21 – Submitted by Reps. Lee and Jacobson 01/26/21 – Held by Committee 9-0-0	Held 7-0-0

A motion was made and seconded to take this item up out of order.

Vice Chair Zelinsky explained that he spoke to the Legal department and there is no legal or ethical issue with this resolution. He contacted Sunrun, Inc., a solar panel supplier in the area, to get an estimate on his personal residence. Vice Chair Zelinsky stated for the record: "I was told the cost for materials, labor and a large battery would cost \$36,200.00 if purchased up front without a loan or installments. I also inquired what would happen if there is a lot of snow on roofs with solarized panels and was told the battery would last for three days before going dead".

Rep. Lee reviewed this item briefly. In order to achieve the amount of carbon usage the country needs to get to, we need to change how energy is generated. This resolution can help to make this happen now.

The Committee agreed that experts on solar energy should be invited to the next Committee meeting. The invitees should include experts that are not providers.

A motion to hold this item was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 7-0-0 (Reps. Jacobson, Zelinsky, Adams, Lee, Mahoney, Sherwood, and Watkins in favor).

¹ Video Time Stamp: 00:01:03

- ²¹. O30.084 REVIEW: Status of FY 2020-21 Budget and Potential Impacts for 2021-22 budget **Report Made**
02/03/21 -Submitted by Rep. Di Costanzo

Mr. McGrath reviewed Item #1 and there was brief discussion.

- Most of the FY 2021/2022 budget increases are inflationary. There are no large additions to the budget.
- Vehicle maintenance has software issues. Many of the software programs do not work well, and this impacts chargebacks to other departments. This also creates problems extracting data which impacts grants abilities and maintenance programs.
- Mayor Martin has requested a new position of Assistant City Engineer.
- Operations is in the process of replacing retirements.
- Three positions are being upgraded for a total increase of approximately \$20K.
- Mr. McGrath will send the BOR a list of the positions being replaced and upgraded.

- ³². O30.083 REVIEW; Issue of WPCA Liens Being Implemented during COVID-19 Pandemic **Report Made**
02/03/21 – Submitted by Reps. Curtis and Stella

Rep. Curtis explained that he put this item on the Agenda because he has received calls from constituents about late fees and notices of liens from the WPCA. Due to the financial issues with the pandemic, he feels the government should have some responsibility to show latitude towards these individuals. He would like to get more information as to late fees and how the lien process works.

Chair Jacobson stated he would like to know how many residents have had liens placed on their properties since April 2020.

Ms. Bull and Mr. Brink explained the lien process in detail.

- There are more than 20,000 WPCA accounts in Stamford. There were under 1,000 liens placed for the April 2020 billing, and about 850 liens to be processed for the October 2020 billing.
- In April 2020, residents were given up to 90 days extra to pay their accounts without any additional interest or liens.
- Unlike other services the WPCA is never shut off. Residents still get the service even if they do not pay for it, so the WPCA has to recoup the charges.
- The lien process begins after there has been no payment and no communication from the customer for five to six months. During that time many attempts are made to reach the customer via phone calls and letters.
- The bill paying collection rate is the same now as it was pre-COVID. Between 95% to 98% of all customers' bills are current.
- The Stamford WPCA has never fully foreclosed on a property. The foreclosure process begins when a residential bill has reached \$5,000 with no payment.
- The WPCA makes every effort to help residents.
- Payment plans of as little as \$5.00 per month are accepted.

² Video Time Stamp: 00:12:00

³ Video Time Stamp: 00:25:50

- No customer contact results in the worst situation. It is important for the customer to contact the WPCA to work out a payment plan.
- When an account goes to collections, the WPCA pays the fees up front, then the customer has to pay the WPCA. The collection letter costs between \$200-\$250. The initial collection letter is now sent after 180 days of no payment.
- There is a 1.5% late interest fee every month which is a State statute.
- Ms. Bull will get the BOR a list of accounts currently in the lien process.

The Committee agreed it was very helpful to get clarification on the WPCA process, so this information can be passed onto constituents.

43. [O30.069](#) REVIEW; South End Fire House; Installation of **Held 9-0-0**
 Police Substation and Duration of Substation at
 Location.
 03/04/20 – Submitted by Rep. Adams
 12/29/20 – Report Made & Held by Committee 6-0-0
 01/11/21 – Moved to Pending

Chair Jacobson explained this item is on the Agenda to get clarification about how the amendment happened without the BOR knowing about it. The BOR does not have to approve an amendment to an agreement that does not affect the pricing, although the amendment may amend the obligations. This seems improper.

Mr. Pollard and Mr. Jankowski explained the amendment and there was discussion.

- The Administration is allowed to amend terms of an agreement as long as it does not affect the pricing. It does not have to go thru the BOR for every term change.
- The Stamford Police Dept. has moved away from the substation model. It is more valuable to put officers in the field. Previously they would go to substations to do field reports, but it is more effective to have officers in their car doing reports, visible to the community.
- Does this amendment have value? Removal of the police substation obligation means the buyer now has an additional 150 square feet of property.
- Even if this amendment had to happen, the information should have been shared with the BOR, especially to the Representatives of District 3.
- Why is something allowed to be removed in the agreement that was a requirement in the RFP?
- Part of why it was sold for a low price was because the tenant had to allow a substation free of charge for 10 years. Many companies did not bid because of this requirement.
- The property has been difficult to sell for 20 years. It was for sale for so long that the structure has seriously deteriorated. Many bids were withdrawn after a review of the property.
- Because this was City property, the public has a right to know what was received in this agreement.
- The next Committee meeting should focus on how the amendment of October 2020 came to be and what was the thought process behind it.

⁴ Video Time Stamp: 01:31:30

Rep. Sherwood requested that Mr. Pollard send the BOR the detailed supporting documents regarding this transaction at least five days prior to the next Committee meeting.

Mayor Martin will be invited to the next meeting.

A motion to hold this item was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 9-0-0 (Reps. Jacobson, Zelinsky, Adams, Coleman, Curtis Lee, Mahoney, Sherwood, and Watkins in favor).

Chair Jacobson adjourned the meeting at 9:16pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jonathan Jacobson, Chair

This meeting is on [video](#).