

Minutes of OLEC Meeting

10 November 2008

7:30 PM, Room 126 Town Hall.

Present: B. Kosicki; Martin Graetz, T. McDonagh, G. Green

1. The minutes for the October meeting were accepted as written and revised.
2. We discussed several points made by Board members during our Oversight meeting with them on November 3.

First, it was suggested that some OLEC activities don't need to be done within a governmental organization, and that one of these activities was OLEC's promotion and execution of star parties.

To start this discussion, we reviewed our charge in 2005 by the Board, when the committee was changed from an "advisory" to an "education" committee. The reason for this education component was that the 2004 bylaws specifically exempted residents of Acton, under strong advice of the Board at the time the bylaws were written, and so an important goal of the new OLEC would be to inform residents about responsible outdoor lighting and how it could be achieved. The star parties were conceived as a way to gently get this point of view across to the non-commercial Town residents. The OLEC web site is also focused on residential and non-commercial properties.

So, we were not able to reach the conclusion that the star party component of OLEC was not an important activity within our charter. We will continue this discussion in the future.

Second, it was suggested that OLEC should consider in the long term whether it would be folded into a future Green Advisory Committee instead of remaining a separate Outdoor Lighting-oriented committee.

We were not sure what the motivation of such a suggestion was, and therefore only were able to discuss it from its impact on our business. The problems are, first, we don't have a good idea of what the Green Advisory Committee will take as its charter, nor whether outdoor lighting issues will be judged as important to as-yet-unnamed future members of this committee. Second, assuming that this were considered to be a valid subject of the GA committee, it wasn't clear how the range of topics that presumably would be addressed by GA would be able to be handled realistically in a meeting during which very specific and detailed concerns about outdoor lighting would also be addressed. However, we will re-address this suggestion later when the GA group is formed and we know more about it and how outdoor lighting concerns might fit in.

3. New work of OLEC. We prioritized several topics of potential future business that had been discussed previously.

The top three items were agreed to be:

A. Address outdoor lighting concerns with the schools. This is a major issue in Acton, from cost, energy and public relations viewpoints, since there have been a number of questions to OLEC about how to reduce these lights over the years. BK will ask Lauren Rosenzweig whether the letter she will write to the schools asking its cooperation with Green Acton Advisory Committee would include also OLEC.

B. Review of Site Plan Permits from April 2004 to the present, to see how the 2004 Lighting Bylaw is working in actual projects. This project has been discussed several times in the past, but was recently deferred until OLEC finished its business of surveying and proposing the streetlight change. OLEC feels that such reviews should be a standard practice after zoning bylaws are changed, and we hope to act as a good example to other groups in town that propose and enact bylaw changes. MG will visit the building department to get a list of projects from 2004 to present.

C. Earth Hour in Acton. Last year, OLEC mentioned this program, and we were asked by a Board member whether we would be able to follow up on this. We have decided to make this a project for the upcoming year. The 2009 Earth Hour will take place Saturday, March 28. TM will take the lead in planning OLEC's Earth Hour program. We will try to interest the Acton and Regional Schools in participating.