7 July 2009

7:30 PM, Room 126 Town Hall.

Present: B. Kosicki; Gary Green, M. Graetz, S. Pratt, H. Millett, T. McDonagh
Visitor: Christopher Schaffner of the Green Advisory Board

1. Christopher Shaffner of the Green Advisory Board was a visitor. He discussed with OLEC the suggestion that had been made previously by the BoS that OLEC should think about joining with the GAB.

CS said the initial reaction of the GAB to this suggestion was that, in spite of the suggestion of its name that GAB should include "everything green", right now it was focused narrowly on energy issues. The consensus of GAB was that inclusion of OLEC concerns, another narrow issue, would dilute the main GAB current thrust.

CS said that, although OLEC had been concerned with energy issues in the streetlight project, he thought that generally OLEC was concerned with regulations and permitting issues.

BK countered with the idea that the real mission of OLEC was to reduce light pollution, and in the sense that the general reduction of all kinds of man-made pollution was "green", then this would make the OLEC mission also a generally "green" one also. This point caused CS to reconsider his characterization of OLEC, and to admit that it was another "green" group.

The problem seems to be that each committee has specific and focused objectives at any given time, and is therefore not well equipped organizationally to combine two different thrusts, each of which may be generally "green", but each of which would require a completely different set of expertise (therefore, the picture that two committees are meeting together with two very different sets of members).

MG suggested a new idea- that what might be needed is an "umbrella" organization (say, with an overall "green" focus in this case). This organization would be composed of several different "working groups", such as the GAB, OLEC, and perhaps others, each of whose thrusts would be generally "green". The goal of this "umbrella" group would be to understand and coordinate the activities and programs of all of its working groups, and perhaps act as the single point of contact with the BoS in its dealing with all the different working groups under it. This would help to streamline the need of the BoS to keep track of these different committees or working groups, and would in effect act as an administrative layer to report to the BoS. Of course, the BoS would still retain the ability to talk directly to any "working group" directly if necessary on any specific issue(s), but the intent would be to rely on the "umbrella" group for most of the two way communications between the working groups and the BoS.

There was a comment that this type of administrative umbrella organization would probably be useful in coordinating other groups of Town committees that had some commonality of purpose.

MG volunteered to write up a summary of this idea, and to think of various advantages and disadvantages which would follow from it. We will discuss this again at our next meeting.

Chris S and OLEC agreed that the GAB and OLEC would meet in a joint session sometime in early September, to plan and coordinate the response of each committee in their Oversight meetings with the BoS that are scheduled for October 22.

2. GG asked whether OLEC would again attempt to hold a Town –wide Star Party at NARA again, after two recent tries resulted in cancellation due to bad weather. He also said that, in contrast to the view expressed by one of the Board, he considers that Star Parties are an integral part of OLEC's business in educating the Town to the problems with unabated light pollution.

GG will contact SF, who was not present, to see if a NARA event could be scheduled for this Fall.

3. We discussed briefly that an overview of what OLEC does and its mission is needed, to explain how events like the Star Parties is a part of our core business. We deferred discussion of this to a future meeting. Included in this is how the web site is organized and what information it should contain. We will seek to clarify this overview before the OLEC Annual Report is needed in December.

4. TM discussed his communications with the Engineering and Design firm he has been communicating with informally concerning the High School parking lot layout and lighting levels. The engineer of this group (which had been giving gratis information to OLEC) agreed that the lighting levels were overbright. There are no "official" brightness standards, but only "guidelines" supplied by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America. (OLEC is familiar with this organization and its standards, and cited them in its 2007 report on lighting levels of the high school). This firm specializes in "low impact" engineering and design, and says it favors lower levels that are cited in the IESNA guidelines, and has found these to be very safe and effective. BK had had private communications with several other lighting designers and has learned the same information. More discussion and a decision of a way ahead on this issue will be taken up in a future meeting.

5. The minutes of the June meeting were accepted as written.

6. Next regular meeting 4 August, Tuesday, at 7:30PM in room 121.