**NEW ENGLAND LOCAL ENERGY NETWORK**

November 16, 2012 Meeting Notes

Present: Lynn Benander (Co-op Power), Toni Bouchard (SmartPower), Andy Burt (ME Partners for Cool Communities), Keil Cory (VT Energy and Climate Action Network/VNRC), Linda Darveau (EPA), Rob Garrity (MA Climate Action Network), Marin Goldstein (Center for Ecological Technology), Vincent Maraventano (MA Interfaith Power & Light) Beth Milham (Newport, RI Energy Commission), Cheryl King Fischer (NEGEF) and Julia Dundorf (NEGEF/Network Coordinator)

Meeting Purpose: The Network is both a learning and strategic collaborative thinking community. Coming together we will:

* Build on the growing relationships and inter-program knowledge of Network members – in other words get to know each other better.
* Support a space where New England organizations supporting local energy and climate efforts can connect, share projects, best practices, challenges and be more strategic.
* Continue to define and build our Network – starting the discovery of our common goals and a shared agenda to drive our collective work.

Outcomes of the Meeting:

* Members gained a greater depth of knowledge of each other’s programs’ - the goals and a shared agenda to drive this collaborative work. Their stories are below.
* Members had a rich discussion and began shaping common goals and an agenda to inspire and guide the network.
* Members identified resources and discussions they want going forward and the coordinator will incorporate them in the Network’s 2013 work plan.
* Members were reminded to consider using, and were given a quick introduction to our collaboration web platform – Groupsites (http://localenergy.groupsite.com)
* Attendees selected the official name of the Network – the ***New England Local Energy Network***

Coordinator’s Update: (Based off a brief set of slides presented to attendees)

1. Conducted Two Surveys of Members
   1. Highlights from Survey 1:

* Most important element of the 7/11 Convening?

Building a network for long term collaboration

* How often would you travel to meet network partners in person? Quarterly
* How often would you take part in a sub-group Skype or conference call as appropriate to your focus area? Majority were monthly or semi-monthly
  1. Highlights from Survey 2:
* Key enhancement to the July agenda for today’s meeting?

More time for informal networking.

1. Solution for Virtual Collaboration of Resources & Ideas
   1. Established Our Technology Platform: <http://localenergy.groupsite.com>
   2. Trainings on Using Groupsites
      1. Conducted Training Webinar
      2. Today!
2. Information Exchange Webinars
   1. Residential Campaigns - Green Sneakers (ME), Thetford weatherization project (VT), CT Energy Challenge
   2. Municipal Energy Planning Models - Metropolitan Area Planning Council/Local Energy Action Program
   3. The Energy Raising Model - Plymouth Area Renewable Energy Initiative’s (PAREI) “offspring”
   4. Upcoming:

-Energy Raisers and Home Energy Efficiency Teams - PAREI/HEET

-Issues and Use of Energy Data

1. Coaching and Resource Sharing with Member Groups
   1. Island Institute Energy Conference
   2. Newport (RI) Energy & Environment Commission (by Skype!)
2. Connecting Our Network
   1. NH Local Energy Work Group
   2. Network (Building) Community of Practice – Bethel, ME
   3. New England Energy Dashboard work team
   4. DOE Sponsored Wind Siting Forum

6.Funding the Network Work – NEGEF continues to fundraise for this Network work including for stipends for Network Members.

*Note: Please let Julia know if you’d like any further info on any of the above Coordinator’s Update items.*

Member Reports - Who Are We and What We’re Doing?

MA Interfaith Power & Light (MA IPL) – Vince

1. A big surprise is the success the “Solar for Faith Community” project – working with the firm SunBug, congregations can purchase photovoltaic systems for their churches, synagogues and mosques. Since June 10 congregations have signed up for the program, 40 more are exploring it with they congregants, and the UCC congregation in Andover has already installed a system that will produce over 90% of the electricity it uses annually.
2. CARES is another campaign MAIPL is doing with HEET (Cambridge’s Home Energy Efficiency Team). This weatherization program also draws on the technical expertise of SunBug, and using the volunteer model of HEET, helps congregants do much of the weatherization work, guided by a professional but with the elbow grease of volunteers. A related benefit of the CARES program is to educate and motivate congregants to bring these learned skills back to their own homes.
3. A challenge - MAIPL has found – when partnering with different organizations, while the campaign content seems matched to the organizations, the different organizational cultures and leadership styles are often initial and significant barriers to project delivery.

Vermont Energy & Climate Action Network (VECAN) – Keil Corey

1. VECAN and one of it’s members, the Vermont Natural Resources Council hosted a series of forums around Vermont so the town energy groups and committees and general public could better understand Vermont’s Comprehensive Energy Plan. The Plan sets out many actions the state will need to reach its goal of meeting 90% of its total energy needs in 2050 from renewables. These forums were designed to help the local committees both understand the plan and begin to identify things they can do at the community level to move toward that goal.
2. VECAN will hold its annual local energy conference on Saturday, December 1, 2012 in Fairlee, VT. This is the place where the 100+ local committees gather to share and support each other’s work. <http://www.regonline.com/builder/site/default.aspx?EventID=1154522>
3. VT Home Energy Challenge – The Vermont Energy Investment Corp. (VEIC), home of Efficiency Vermont is about to launch a statewide energy challenge focused on home energy efficiency efforts. One of VT’s energy goals is to have 80,000 homes weatherized by 2020. More information will soon be posted on the Efficiency Vermont website.
4. Challenges: For Keil, it is getting up to speed fast. He has been in this position for only two months. Welcome Keil and great job representing VECAN!

Maine Partners for Cool Communities/Green Sneakers – Andy Burt

1. Green Sneakers, a project of the Maine Partners for Cool Communities partnership, is now over a year old and supporting volunteer teams in both the Mid-coast and York Counties. Volunteer teams, many young people, go door-to-door inviting homeowners to think about home energy improvements. If there is interest, these volunteers, trained in home energy ‘walk-throughs,’ then help the owners take different weatherization and conservation actions.
2. Green Sneakers has other partners, too. Some faith-based congregations have donated time and resources to make interior storm windows that are placed in homes of lower income people.
3. Interest in this program is high, but Andy and the other Partner leaders do most of this work largely as volunteers. This lack of capacity and funding there of is its greatest challenge. They are doing a major year-end direct appeal and Andy shared the materials they will insert in those letters – a great decal and ‘calling cards’ with Green Sneaker information to encourage the donors to pass along to other friends and neighbors with encouragement that they, too, do audits and weatherizations.

Environmental Protection Agency/New England – Linda Darveau

1. National elections mean EPA will be able to continue to move new thinking and regulations update work forward. The agency and federal government under this administration had begun to dismantle their own siloed thinking. They are reviewing regulations and programs, looking at the whole entity, not piecemeal, centering this approach on resiliency and the abilities of communities to survive and thrive in the face of climate change and other pressing concerns.
2. EPA is offering more and more tools and guidance to help communities and states do this work and Linda reported that EPA N.E. has some funds to support college/12 week ‘GROW Internships’ for next summer. Contact Linda for more information (using Groupsites!)
3. Linda also said that EPA N.E. has a small pool of funds for non-profits and others to use to help defray venue costs for events, and some other hard costs. Call Linda for more details on either of these funding opportunities.

Coop Power – Lynn Benander

1. Co-op Power is a multi-class, multi-race movement for a sustainable and just energy future. It's a decentralized network of Local Organizing Councils that build locally owned energy businesses, create good green jobs and help consumers use less energy and meet more of the region’s energy needs with clean energy.  There are 6 Councils in Massachusetts and Vermont and another 6 under development. Each Council partners with a number of non-profits, cooperatives, churches and businesses in their regions.
2. The Co-op secures the technologies, provides technical assistance, and buys in bulk to make these resources available to all as affordably as possible.
3. One of the major challenge facing the Co-op is having the capacity to serve the increasing interest and need in this delivery model.  Other challenges include:

* Members want to be part of a larger regional strategy to get to a sustainable and just future
* They find it hard to sustain community support for long-term business development
* Access to capital for large-scale business development projects
* Managing cash flow with MassSave 90 day reimbursements from Honeywell
* Community based funding for new biz dev, leadership development
* Rebuilding our Neighbor to Neighbor solar hot water program
* Volunteer organizing and oversight
* Managing the tension between maintaining operations and getting out to build networks/coalitions
* Building our capacity as we grow:

o   transition from small/one key manager co-op to a cooperative with a strong management team able to manage growing programs,

o   transition from an organization with less than 50 employees to one with more,

o   transition from an organization with few resources/mostly volunteer to one with more responsibility to provide a consistent/strong work environment

Revelations: MassSave gives people the idea that they can finish their responsibility for climate change with simple, no-cost and deeply discounted measures. We believe it's a good place to start, but would rather see the saving used to fund deeper energy retrofits.

Things we need:

* Help building the market in Boston for our new energy efficiency crew.
* New Members and new Member Loans to launch our biodiesel plant
* Access to capital, financing, grants, loans
* Partnerships with other sister organizations with coordinated strategies that move people’s souls and demonstrate we can get to the just and sustainable world we want to live in.

SmartPower – Toni Bouchard

1. SmartPower’s regional solar challenge was launched in the spring and Boston was one of the first cities to take it on. Calling it the *Solarize Boston* Project, before SmartPower’s help and approach, 100 installations had been done (was it in past 10 years, Lynn?). With the marketing and program design SmartPower developed in Arizona, they doubled the number of PV units installed in just 20 weeks and are now generating more than 5 megawatts of power on five large grocery stores.
2. Also working with *Solarize Connecticut* in four communities – Portland, Durham, Westport and Fairfield, and program is showing much promise there, too. One of the keys to the success of this program is the approach is straightforward and exciting. Keeping our messages simple is something SmartPower has learned and wants to share with the rest of us in the network.
3. Challenges – finding affinity groups to whom they can reach out. Who are the groups in the region who would like to partner with SmartPower to do the challenge? Toni connected with Beth Milham/Newport, RI to explore how to offer the challenge in Rhode Island. Julia will share the RI scan in the next couple weeks.

Center for EcoTechnology – Marin Goldstein

1. CET’s *Go Green* has a goal to incent 10,000 individual sustainable actions over the next three years – energy efficiency, renewable energy installations, solid waste reductions – big and little actions from installing a compost bin to installing as PV unit on one’s house. The campaign was launched in November 2011 and already has 3,000 actions recorded.
2. The big challenge here is trying to use this approach to stimulate both social behavior and infrastructure changes. They are partnering with a number of groups, including MA Saves to promote this campaign.
3. The biggest need is a data management system, looking at ‘Sales Force’ to record and manage the actions and their impact.

MA Climate Action Network – Rob Garrity

1. MCAN has 42 chapters, most of which formed years ago, used ICLEI and other community level assessment tools, helped shape local energy plans and have tried a large number of campaigns and approaches from home energy audits and weatherization work to transportation strategies.
2. MCAN has also promoted a couple of the Massachusetts government programs like the Stretch Codes and Green Communities. Encouraging and helping the local committees bring these state programs to their municipalities has been part of MCAN’s work.
3. The organization has been evolving from is core driver – energy and climate action- as its catalyzing motivator, to a broader engagement strategy – calling on its members to help define and promote community resilience and sustainability. They are just in the beginning of this thinking, and will accept thoughts and ideas from others in this network.

Newport Energy and Environment Commission – Beth Milham

1. This is a 7-member commission established by the City of Newport governing body. It began as a Task Force in 2007 and after it so efficiently and effectively accomplished its first assignment, the City Council made it an official commission with specific topical areas including Environmental Education in the Schools, Renewable Energy, Alternative Transportation, Sustainable Resource and Waste Reduction, Energy Assessments.
2. Currently they are working with their city as advisors to the Planning Board and Planning Dept staff to draft and adopt a wind ordinance. And they are working on a protocol for sustainable practices at the numerous, expansive public events that occur in Newport annually. Each event needs to secure a license, and in the future it will include practices to capture and recycle the wastes, promote shared transportation to and from the events and more.
3. One recent challenge was around the construction of a new school (to NE CHPS standards). Although the building will excel in efficiency, the NEEC’s chief complaint was that it sacrificed renewables, with the loss of efficiency mainly in extra insulation beyond the efficient level it already included, and the exterior sunshades. According to Beth though, in all fairness, the architect says the school in on track to receive the maximum funding for efficiency from the RI Dept. of Ed. The NEEC wished they’d been more forward-looking, in building the only new school in RI in years, or on the horizon for the immediate future.

*Note: Julia Dundorf shared what several network members had sent in their absences (SERG & CA-CP) and from the NH Local Energy Work Group as well as an update on a NE energy data “dashboard”.*

From Bob Walker of the Sustainable Energy Resource Group (SERG) –

1. Home Weatherization - SERG just completed a "How To Guide" describing our efforts working with the Thetford Energy Committee in 2011 to implement a comprehensive, local initiative to promote home weatherization.  The Guide was commissioned by Efficiency Vermont for use in helping other towns replicate and modify similar efforts in their communities. The Guide can be found at:  <http://www.efficiencyvermont.com/docs/for_partners/community/Organizing-a-Home-Energy-Door-To-Door-Campaign.pdf>

Efficiency Vermont has also contracted with SERG to consult and coordinate with Upper Valley towns that decide to participate in the Vermont Home Energy Challenge.  Under the Challenge, local organizations will foster public awareness about energy-saving opportunities in the home and will set a target of weatherizing three percent of the homes in their community over the course of a year.  Towns will then be able to measure their progress toward their goals along with that of other communities in their region and across the state.  At the end of the year, towns will be recognized and rewarded for the effectiveness of their efforts to encourage participation in their communities. You can learn more about the Challenge at [www.efficiencyvermont.com/homeenergychallenge](http://www.efficiencyvermont.com/homeenergychallenge) or by contacting Paul Markowitz, Community Energy Program Manager, Efficiency Vermont at [802 540 7608](file:///tel/802%20540%207608) or [pmarkowitz@veic.org](mailto:pmarkowitz@veic.org) .

1. SERG Real Estate Course Accreditation and First Workshop - The New Hampshire Real Estate Commission recently approved a new two-credit workshop developed by SERG and the Efficiency Training Program at Lakes Region Community College. The "Energy Issues in Existing Homes: What Real Estate Professionals Need to Know" workshop is specifically designed to help real estate professionals better serve their clients, and includes topics such as:

* Why some homes use more energy than others;
* Finding and listing information on a home's energy performance;
* Helping clients solve home energy problems;
* The cost-effectiveness of different energy improvements;
* Energy financing options and incentives for existing homes; and
* Marketing a home's energy performance.

Realtors are an important group to help educate homeowners on the value of home weatherization. The inaugural workshop took place today, Thur., November 15 in Plymouth, NH,  and was hosted by the Plymouth Area Renewable Energy Initiative (PAREI). We will be contacting regional realtor associations throughout NH to schedule additional workshops in the coming months.  For more information or to help schedule a workshop in your area, contact Bob Walker at 802-785-4126 or [bwalker@serg-info.org](mailto:bwalker@serg-info.org) .

1. Public Forum – Can Vermont Learn from Germany’s Energy Transition? – November 29 - SERG director Bob Walker and Vermont State Representative Margaret Cheney will report on what they learned from their recent trip to Germany as guests of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. The trip, which was designed for policy-makers and advocates who are advancing renewable energy, included seven other Americans from around the U.S. They spent the week traveling around Germany to meet with members of Parliament, government officials, cooperative organizers, technical consultants, and farmers, all of whom are rapidly helping to make Germany the world’s leader in renewable-energy development. Bob and Margaret will share photos, stories, and lessons from their trip and discuss how government policies, financing mechanisms, and local involvement can stimulate the growth of renewable energy, create business opportunities, and strengthen the regional economy.

This public forum will take place: Thursday, November 29 from 6:30 to 8:30pm at Montshire Museum of Science Community Room, Norwich

The forum is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served. For more information, contact SERG at 802-785-4126, [SERG@serg-info.org](mailto:SERG@serg-info.org) or [www.SERG-info.org](http://www.serg-info.org/)  If you would like to read our Germany travelogue, go to: <http://www.serg-info.org/workshops/> .  If you would like to see photos posted throughout the trip, go to <https://picasaweb.google.com/105508616190567203218/RuralCleanEnergyTour>.

1. VECAN Annual Conference – December 1 - SERG is working with our VECAN partners to organize our annual Community Energy and Climate Action Conference, taking place on December 1 at the Lake Morey Inn in Fairlee, Vermont. . The conference will focus on what grassroots leaders can do to achieve the state’s energy goals. This daylong event offers workshops on powerful clean energy strategies; regional roundtable discussions on hot topics; a stellar keynote — Chris Martenson — who will speak powerfully on the intersection of energy, the environment and the economy in resource-constrained times; an update from Governor Peter Shumlin (invited); great “networking” opportunities and a fabulous, largely local lunch. Anyone interested in reducing energy costs, making the transition to renewables and tackling climate change should attend. For more information and  to register, please go to <http://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=1154522>

From Clean Air-Cool Planet, Roger Stephenson –

Roger asked that a recent report produced by CA-CP be shared with the Network as a potential resource in Members’ work. From CA-CP’s website: *Clean Air-Cool Planet has published a major new report documenting the outcomes and analyzing the lessons learned from the last six years of our community-based climate and energy solutions programs. In the report, Strategies to Accelerate Climate and Energy Action at the Local Level, we've examined the original assumptions underlying our community programs, as well as our impact and our effectiveness, and have provided case studies of each of our 10 major community-oriented programs undertaken since 2006.*

*Perhaps most importantly, we've produced a series of recommendations that we believe will be of interest and use to any organization – foundations, non-profits, corporations, municipalities – with an interest in best practices and innovation in accelerating the shift to sustainability at the local level.* Download it:

<http://www.cleanair-coolplanet.org/for_communities/2012assessment.php>

NH Local Energy Work Group, Julia Dundorf

1. The LEWG has produced the “Energy Calendar” for use by energy committees and municipal volunteers/staff to prepare to bring energy projects before town meeting (this is NH specific at this time). Each month in the calendar has recommendations for what towns people might research or launch in order to have a successful outcome on securing funding for such energy projects. Visit Groupsites for a copy of the calendar. Julia and Linda Darveau (one of the masterminds behind this tool) suggested that this calendar could be adapted by other states with appropriate recognition. Contact Julia if interested.
2. The LEWG is also in the planning stages for a spring 2013 delivery of its annual Local Energy Solutions Conference. More on this to come. Of course we welcome out of staters!

New England Energy Dashboard: Measuring Progress Towards a Sustainable Energy System

*Note: The below is an excerpt from an in-process, draft concept paper shared with us by Andrea Colnes, Executive Director of the VT Energy Action Network - 802-595-2622 -*

[*acolnes@eanvt.org*](mailto:acolnes@eanvt.org) *Read the whole white paper at:* [*http://localenergy.groupsite.com/file\_cabinet/214281*](http://localenergy.groupsite.com/file_cabinet/214281) *under “non-member resources”*

“All six New England states have adopted Energy and Climate Action Plans in one form or another with a broad range of goals addressing energy use, independence, security, affordability and greenhouse gas reduction. Only one of these states – Massachusetts – has passed legislation that translates these goals into law (2009 Massachusetts Global Warming Solutions Act). Detailed information on the goals and targets set in these plans is available in a recent paper, “Climate Change and Problem-Solving in the Northeast: A Legacy of Action” (Rector and Wake 2012).

Realizing the potential of this broad regional focus on climate action and energy-system transformation depends on many complex and interrelated factors in the public and private sectors. Underlying all efforts, however, is the need for a clear and concise way to understand and measure energy use and the related economic, social and environmental consequences. A New England Regional Energy Dashboard is envisioned as a way to provide an independent, highly credible and long-term mechanism to measure and define energy use from economic, social and environmental perspectives. Its purpose is to support a robust and visible public conversation and help drive public and private action.

**Purpose**: To track and measure specific progress towards achieving a sustainable energy economy across New England through expansion of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. The Dashboard is intended to provide a highly credible and independent driver for public and private energy policy and action.”

GroupSites – the Network’s Online Sharing Space

Network members were strongly urged to log on to and use the network’s GroupSites site. Julia gave a review of the site and what it offers. Here is what one needs to do to sign up and begin using the site: simply accept the invitation email that Julia sent some weeks back. Please let her know if you can’t find it and she’ll resend. Sign-up takes a few minutes and gives you access to Member uploads.

Network Functioning and Structure

Cheryl led this discussion on what we want this network to become and do. We began the dialogue exploring our shared values and goals, and found a great deal of alignment around the reasons we are doing our personal, organizational and now network work – at the highest level it is about making the world, and New England as our part of the picture, a more just, equitable, democratic and sustainable world, we all agreed that we have chosen to use the energy and climate issue area on which to create action and understanding. We further agreed that we really appreciate and need this forum in which to come together, share, help each other – this is a learning and strategic community. We then went on to make some very specific decisions:

1. Name of the network will be the ***New England Local Energy Network***
2. 2013 Meetings – there will be three in-person meetings and the group selected the following dates, to be tested on the whole network through a doodle poll. This way we’ll have these in our calendars well in advance.
   1. March 8th 1st choice w/ March 22nd as the alternate
   2. July 12th / or July 26th
   3. October 18th/or October 25th
3. The group again agreed that they want to use GroupSites, and will need more prodding from Julia to get us all signed up. The more we post materials to share, the more likely it is that we will all use it. Julia has agreed to start “priming the pump” to make the site more valuable for users by receiving your key resources, reports, white papers, whatever you think the Members will benefit from and loading them FOR Members to the site. Please send ASAP with clear descriptions of their category (residential, transportation, etc.) /use/application. Thanks!
4. Webinars – Julia asked for input from the Members. Should she continue to pull these together as the group asked in July. Response: Yes, but some need to be information targeted, others where we can explore a topic in greater depth – that is where all can converse online –
   1. Julia will explore with the NEGEF staff how to use GoToMeeting for this purpose – in other words virtual meetings with a topical focus. Please keep watching for these announcements.
   2. Next Webinar is December 5th from 12:30-1:30 - NE Network Collaborative Webinar: The "Energy Raiser" models of PAREI and HEET
5. Emails & Communications - Julia also asked for input on the quantity and quality of the emails she uses to communicate with members.  The input was that there were NOT too many and her reminders are helpful.  The group discussed strategies for subject lines to help members prioritize NE Network items.

We all agreed that Julia has done an exceptional job to date guiding the development of this network, organizing and offering network tools (Groupsite) and trainings, and being a great anchor and support person. We all look forward to 2013 where we will increase content exchange and give each other more strategic moral support. Thanks to all who have contributed so much to date.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl King Fischer

New England Grassroots Environment Fund