

**Vermont Interfaith Power and Light
St. Michael's School, Montpelier
Board Meeting Minutes
June 19, 2010**

Present: The Rev. Susanna Griefen, Betsy Hardy, Colin High, Ron McGarvey, Wes Sanders, Sister Laurian Seeber, Sam Swanson, Ruah Swennerfelt and The Rev. Nancy Wright.

Sam welcomed everyone and gave an opportunity for agenda changes. Nancy opened with a prayer.

Board member introductions and sharing

We went around the circle so everyone could introduce themselves and tell about their background. Our new board member, Susanna Griefen, began. She's the pastor of the Dummerston Congregational Church, and began serving there last summer. Prior to this, she served a church in Connecticut that was active in environmental issues. Susanna is the Chair of the Department of Mission for the Vermont Conference, United Church of Christ. This is a good platform for her to reach out to other UCC churches in Vermont. She recently attended a meeting in Massachusetts with UCC leaders from the other New England states to talk about climate change. She's hopeful that Vermont's UCC churches will soon be more engaged with the issue.

Colin said that he is President of New Hampshire Interfaith Power and Light (NHIPL). Their board modeled NHIPL on VT IPL; he expressed appreciation for the spiritual and practical help VT IPL has given them. Ruah spoke very highly of Bill McKibben's new book, *Eaarth*, and wondered about the possibility of selling it through our website. Ron expressed gratitude to Nancy, Ruah, and Betsy for the prayer service in Burlington. Betsy asked the board about gathering the reflections people shared at the prayer service and posting them on VT IPL's website; board members supported this.

Nancy spoke about the national IPL meeting in Washington, D.C. and the highlights for her: Sally Bingham's "stump speech," other guest speakers, and our visit to "The Hill." She also told about actions being taken by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). They plan to cut their emissions by 20% by 2015. The New England ELCA Synod passed a resolution about this as have other synods. Nancy is the New England Synod's Environmental Liaison. They're organizing state by state and nationally to reduce their carbon footprint.

Susanna said she learned about Transition Towns when she was at the meeting in MA with other UCC environmental leaders. She spoke of this being a good way to build resilient communities. Ruah is very involved with the Charlotte and Shelburne Transition Town groups. She said that they're mapping Charlotte's "assets," such as skills people have, and are offering "skillshops." Ruah also told about Transition Town members being trained to go out into the community to help make homes more energy efficient with low-flow showerheads, CFLs, etc.

Colin said the Northern New England Unitarian Universalist organization wants to determine their carbon footprint – baseline and targets – and are looking for resources. Sister Laurian told about the online "Survey Monkey" survey that the Episcopal churches throughout Vermont completed to tell about their carbon footprint and actions they'd taken. She said that information from three different people at the church was needed to complete the survey, and she wished that a paper copy had been available. Colin mentioned the vast number of resources out there, including EPA Portfolio Manager, to help with collecting and organizing the information.

Wes said (as he shared in an email message) that he and his wife Susan were planning to move to the Denver area in the next year to be nearer to their children. Board members understood this and were sad that Wes will be leaving. He hopes we can find one or more people to carry on the work he's been doing - starting EcoTeams. Sam said if Wes finds someone, we can invite that person(s) to join the board.

Wes was appreciative of Ron for passing on the contact information for the faith communities where he's done energy assessments. Colin was grateful for the EcoTeam workshop that Wes led for the NHIPL board, and said he's a great role model. Board members wondered if perhaps one or more of the new board members might be interested in picking up some or all of this work. Wes hopes we'll be able to make the transition soon while he's still here and can pass on what he's learned to the new person(s). Betsy will contact Dee to find out if this is something she'd be interested in doing. Betsy will give Wes the contact information for Colorado IPL and for Peter Sawtell at Eco-Justice Ministries.

Nominating Committee Report

Ron reported that the Nominating Committee met and discussed a course of action for finding new board members. The committee decided on some criteria for expanding the board. They looked for new members who: 1. Belong to faith groups not currently represented on the board, 2. Understand the seriousness of the climate crisis and are committed to addressing it, and 3. Come from different parts of the state (geographical diversity). Adding more clergy members to the board is also a goal. Ron gave a brief summary of four of the board candidates. Rabbi Joshua Boettiger leads Congregation Beth El in Bennington; Dee Gish is a lay member of North Pomfret Congregational Church and was trained by Al Gore to give presentations; Rev. Richard (Dick) Hibbert, pastor of First United Methodist Church in Burlington, retires at the end of June; and we've met Rev. Susanna Griefen.

Ruah told about meeting the President of the Islamic Society of Vermont, Taysir Al-Khatib, at the recent prayer service VT IPL sponsored in Burlington. Ruah asked him if he was interested in joining the board. He said yes, and followed up by sending biographical information. Ruah also asked Tian Callery, from the Vermont Zen Center, if she knew of a Buddhist who might be interested in joining the board. Tian agreed to look for someone. Nancy said that she spoke recently with Rebecca Gould, a Middlebury College Professor of religion and ecology who is Jewish, and Rebecca might be interested in joining the board.

Ruah made a motion to approve Taysir Al-Khatib, Rabbi Joshua Boettiger, Dee Gish, Rev. Susanna Griefen, and Rev. Dick Hibbert as members of VT IPL's board. Many people seconded. Colin supported having a large board of skilled people and thanked the Nominating Committee for their work. Ruah suggested that the Nominating Committee (Ron, Ruah, and Betsy) continue to vet possible members such as Rebecca and a Buddhist candidate. **The board unanimously elected the five, new board members. The Nominating Committee was approved as a standing committee.**

Statewide VT IPL Conference

Sam spoke about the vision he has held of VT IPL as a service organization, working to help congregations around the state by making resources and tools available that make it easier to reduce the carbon emissions of religious buildings and the homes of faith community members. He's now broadening his vision to include more advocacy and education about the climate crisis. A statewide meeting for faith communities could provide an opportunity for advocacy and education. Ruah suggested not calling it a meeting – event or conference would be better. Nancy proposed a "sweep" – calling all congregations in the state to invite them and tell about VT IPL; she thought board members could make these calls. A task force to plan the conference was formed and Nancy, Ruah, Sr. Laurian, Sam, and Betsy agreed to serve on it.

Coordinator's Report

Betsy spoke about what she especially appreciated at the national IPL conference. The meetings with staff members in the legislators' offices went well. She thought the meeting with Darren Springer in Sen. Sanders' office was particularly good because she also met with him last year, and felt they were beginning to build a relationship. The IPL conference was good overall, but the schedule was so full, there wasn't much time for informal networking and sharing. Betsy was especially grateful for Rev. Joel Hunter's talk. She told a couple of Rev. Hunter's stories on ways to reach climate skeptics. In one colorful story from his youth, he said his friends had the small squirt guns that were common in the 1960s and he used a very large syringe from his veterinarian grandfather that could give one, long, strong shot. He said it's better to give the skeptics one strong shot re: climate, instead of many small "squirts," then back off and let them think about it. Rev. Hunter also used a water skiing analogy – be flexible, bend your knees, and let go of the rope when you fall (i.e. know when it's time to walk away).

National IPL is promoting a "10% Challenge" campaign – for congregations to pledge to reduce their carbon emissions by 10%. They're encouraging faith communities to take part in the 10/10/10 work day that 350.org is sponsoring. Congregations can either start on actions that day, or they can get started earlier. Wes and Ron volunteered to work on this. Colin suggested a subcommittee and said that he could work with Wes and Ron (by conference call). Nancy suggested linking to the national IPL campaign on our website; there was consensus among board members to do this.

Betsy said that she'd been contacted by a member of Bethany Church (UCC) in Montpelier to see if VT IPL would participate in a "Mission Fair" they're planning for November. We'd have the opportunity to sell products, e.g. CFL bulbs (or LCD workbooks?). The board felt that Betsy's time was too limited and that these events often didn't "pay off" with regard to being able to tell our story or provide education.

EcoTeam Report

Wes reported that he and Ron both visited the Dummerston Congregational Church (at different times) and they went together to do workshops at the UCC annual meeting at Lyndon State College. They also made presentations at the Episcopal ministry fair(s). Wes went to All Soul's Interfaith Gathering in Shelburne for the third time to give a presentation. He said that an EcoTeam was starting at Wake Robin. He commented on the good work that Paul Markowitz was doing in helping to provide training for people so they could make energy efficiency improvements in homes.

Energy Assessments

The number of requests for energy assessments ebbs and flows....not so many requests in 2009, Ron said. He's now getting some follow-up calls asking about next steps. Some people ask about funding sources for making improvements. Ron has a handout sheet with some resources, but it's hard to follow; there aren't any simple funding sources.

Ron has gotten a little feedback on the energy newsletter (and Betsy has gotten some positive feedback), but not much. Sam suggested that it be posted on the website. We've been sending it only to member faith communities. The board discussed this and decided to go ahead and post it on the website. Board members emphasized the importance of building relationships. Sister Laurian spoke of an organization that might be helpful, called "Sacred Places."

Treasurer's Report

Sam announced that since Colin is now President of NHIPL, he will soon be stepping down as VT IPL Treasurer, but will continue to serve on our board. Ruah agreed to take on the Treasurer position, transitionally in the fall and fully by the beginning of 2011, with the caveat that she'll be away for two months in the summer of 2011. The board was grateful for Colin's long-time service and for Ruah's willingness to serve. Colin distributed the finance report; it showed that VT IPL would be out of funds by the end of July. He said that the Challenge grant from The Regeneration Project can be divided in two parts and we can claim the first part soon. We hope to have received at least close to \$3,500 by the end of July so we'll get about half of the \$7,000 grant.

Colin said that if we match the \$7,000, it will provide roughly what we need for the year. He encouraged board members to respond to the appeal letter and to encourage friends, members of their congregations, and others to give. The board agreed to send the appeal letter to the email newsletter list. All contributions count toward the Challenge grant (it's not just the new or increased contributions that count). The group discussed using in-kind contributions as matches toward the Challenge grant since this is allowed, but agreed to do this only in an emergency because VT IPL needs about \$15,000 for its yearly expenses. Colin thought the Challenge grant motivated people to give. He asked that the Fundraising Committee be revived. Sam has chaired this committee and he will convene a meeting soon (Note: A conference call meeting was set for Monday, 5/21 at 9 am). Colin hoped that Ruah would be involved with this committee and he suggested having a face-to-face meeting fairly soon.

Solar Trackers – Photovoltaic Panels

Sam gave a brief summary of the leasing plan offered by All Sun Trackers: customers pay \$1,000 up front, then 20 cents/kwh; they can buy the panels at a discount after 5 years. Green Mt. Power has a program that pays 19 cents/kwh so the out-of-pocket cost is 1 cent. The power goes to the grid; All Sun Trackers retains the carbon credits. There was a brief discussion of VT IPL acquiring a bit of land, putting trackers there, providing green energy, and charging a small fee for our service.

Respectfully submitted,
Betsy Hardy

Action Items

- Post prayer service reflections on website. (Betsy)
- Convene meeting of statewide conference planning task force. (Betsy, Nancy, Ruah, Sam, Sister Laurian)
- Conference call meeting of 10% Challenge and 10/10/10 workday task force. (Colin, Ron, and Wes)
- Post link to TRP's 10% Challenge on VT IPL's website. (Betsy)
- Post Energy Newsletter on VT IPL's website. (Betsy)
- Colin and Ruah to talk about Treasurer's position.
- Send appeal letter to those on email newsletter list. (Betsy)