

Environment Council of Rhode Island



Membership and Board Meeting Minutes October 5, 2020, 5:30 -7:00 PM (Virtual)

Attendees

Polly Barey, Caitlin Aiax, Katherine Gibson, Peter Trafton, David Brunetti, Greg Gerritt, Paige Therien, Kai Salem, Meg Kerr, Priscilla De La Cruz, Lisa Petrie, John Berard, Peter Nightingale, Peter Galvin, Barry Schiller, Eugenia Marks, Nicole DiPaolo, Susan Korte, Dana Goodman, Cassie Tharinger, Paul Beaudette, To-pher Hamblett, Rupert Friday, Mary Jane Sorrentino, Barbara Walsh

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions 5:30 - 5:50 PM

- Approval of [minutes from September meeting](#)
- Office Report
- Election to elect a co-VP of Development: Nicole DiPaolo has been nominated by the Ex Comm

2. Presentation 5:50 - 6:10 PM:

- Peter Galvin and Peter Nightingale, The Nature's Trust Lawsuit against DEM

3. President's Report and Strategic Planning update 6:10 - 6:25 PM

- [Strategic Planning one-pager from ExComm](#)
- [MOU with National Wildlife Federation to support strategic planning](#)

4. Policy Committee and Climate Crisis Campaign 6:25 - 6:55 PM

- Green Report Card
- [Resolution proposal by Transit Riders](#)
- General updates
- Reports from ECRI fiscal agency projects

5. Announcements 6:55 - 7:00 PM

6. Adjourn 7:00 PM

Meeting Minutes

1. Welcome and Introductions

- Began Zoom meeting recording at 5:30 - Introductions are to be placed in the chat
- Moment of silence and remembering Erika Niedowski, who died after a brief and sudden illness on October 2nd, 2020. A fundraiser in her name has been organized by Coalition for Community Solar Access: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/yraua-funding-environmental-justice-for-erika-niedowski>
- Approval of [September Minutes](#): Paul Beaudette makes first motion, Eugenia Marks seconds. All vote in favor.
- Office Report
 - Balances as of 10/1/20: Ed Fund operations \$40,770.21 and ECRI \$36,984.33
 - Tisdale awards: After some discussion, the decision has been made to move ahead with a slightly revamped Tisdale awards grant program. Application period will open shortly after October 15.
 - Meeting next week with RINHS to discuss a virtual RI Nature Video Festival.
 - Successfully update office computer.
 - We have collected about \$5,800 in dues since the annual notice went out in June. If you or your organization has not yet paid, or if you have questions, contact me at the office.
- Election to elect a co-VP of Development: Nicole DiPaolo has been nominated by the Ex Comm
 - Eugenia Marks makes first motion, Meg Kerr seconds. All vote in favor.

2. Presentation

Peter Galvin (President) and Peter Nightingale (Counsel), The Nature's Trust Lawsuit against DEM

- Petition to issue a regulation around climate change to DEM and Council on Climate Change who denied it after 30 days. It was then taken to RI Supreme Court. Next steps were questioning procedures of DEM. Without making process, The Nature's Trust was kicked out of the courts for two years for the following reasons:
 - The court determined it did not have jurisdiction over this case.
 - The court decided that the plaintiffs did not have proper standing to bring this interest to the court.
- The Nature's Trust named after the book by Mary Wood
- Judicial Deference Doctrine
- We must begin taking responsibility for embodied emissions
 - Everything we use comes from somewhere with some sort of emission load
 - Here in RI, we burn substantial amounts of natural gas (most coming from Pennsylvania) - methane escapes on its journey - this is just one of six recognized greenhouse gasses
 - RI's embodied emissions account for 50% of our greenhouse gasses
- Next steps: TBD - as of right now, The Nature's Trust is spreading the word
- RI's 100% Renewable Energy Plan does not account for embodied emissions
 - The plan only focuses on the energy that we consume - much of it is bought from out of state

- It does not require us to shut down any fossil fuel plants, nor does it require usage of the renewables we create in-state
- Follow up with The Nature's Trust: naturestrusti@pobox.com

3. President's Report

- [Strategic Planning One-Pager from ExComm](#) summarizes where we have been in this process (which began in 2017), the goals of ECRI's current efforts, as well as a call to action to join the Strategic Planning Committee (which will be supported by ExComm) to meet once a month - contact is Greg Gerritt (environmentcouncil@earthlink.net)
 - First committee meeting will be some time later in October.
 - Time commitment: meet once a month for an hour
 - Develop timeline and achieve milestones, including hiring a consultant by January 2021 - preferably one with equity background - and begin racial equity trainings
- NWF [MOU with National Wildlife Federation to support strategic planning](#)
 - Vote to finalize the NWF MOU - Kai Salem makes first motion, Dana Goodman seconds, all vote in favor.
- Recommendation: [Rhode Island Foundation's Racial Equity: A Groundwater Approach](#) training

4. Policy Committee and Climate Crisis Campaign

- First meeting of the year was in September. Discussed:
 - Members of PolComm are advocating for a special election for the 2020 Green Bond
 - Vote to approve RI Transit Riders' resolution proposal on the bus hub at Kennedy Plaza - PolComm recommends approval by ECRI board
 - Eugenia Marks makes first motion to pass resolution, Peter Trafton seconds, CLF abstains, all else vote in favor.
 - Climate Crisis Campaign
 - Virtual organizing will require different tools
 - Upcoming legislative session will be important for many of ECRI's priorities such as the Act on Climate bill
 - Green Report Card - biannual report sent out to public on RI legislators' action, or lack thereof, on ECRI policy priorities
 - Motion to give PolComm the ability to finalize the 2020 Green Report Card: Barry Schiller makes first motion, Meg Kerr seconds, all vote in favor.
- Next PolComm meeting is October 19th, 2020 (Moved from October 12th due to Indigenous Peoples Day) from 4:30 - 6:00 PM
 - Potential for briefing newly elected legislators on ECRI and our priorities will be discussed

5. Announcements

- Priscilla De La Cruz is now a non-voting member of the City of Providence Environmental Sustainability Task Force. She is slated to become a voting member in the coming weeks.
- ECRI meeting attendees will begin receiving surveys where they can voice how meetings can be improved, suggest presentation topics/presenters, give general feedback, and more.

- Clean Water Action has announced [General Assembly Endorsements for the 2020 Election](#)
 - Call to Action to join CWA phone banks on Tuesdays and Thursdays - contact John Berard (jberard@cleanwater.org)
- [Poor People's Campaign](#) is working to get people registered to vote and take part in the Census - ideas on how to reach more people? (Peter Nightengale)
- Call for additions to ECRI's weekly email updates: they can be sent to Greg Gerritt, Sue Korte, or Priscilla De La Cruz. Everyone is also welcome to add events to the [calendar](#) via the ECRI website's [form](#).
- NEC Solar will be hosting a couple virtual events with RIRRC in October and November; webinar series with the Providence Libraries (Dana Goodman)
- Kinsley and Dean Street development project - keep an eye out for comment periods.
- Next ECRI Board Meeting:

6. Adjourn

Paul Beaudette makes first motion, Eugenia Marks seconds. Meeting adjourned at 7:56 pm