

Environment Council of Rhode Island



Membership Meeting, Dept. of Admin. Bldg., Conference Room B
November 4, 2019, 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Attendees:

Judee Burr, David Brunetti, Paige Therien, Meg Kerr, Rupert Friday, Fred Unger, Laura Landen, Paul Roselli, Everett Pope, Connor McDaniel, David Veliz, Mal Skowron, Seth handy, Jabes Cuadrado, Nicole DiPaolo, Eric Wilkinson, Timmons Roberts, Greg Gerritt, Katherine Gibson, Kenneth Filarski, Paul Beaudette, Angie Koziara, Barry Schiller, Kai Salem, James Crowley, Michael Roles.

Agenda:

1. Welcome
2. Introductions
3. Approval of minutes
4. Office report (Greg Gerritt)
5. President's report (Priscilla De La Cruz)
6. Presentation: RI's Offshore Wind Energy Opportunity
7. By Nicole DiPaolo, National Wildlife Federation and Eric Wilkinson, Environmental League of Massachusetts
8. Reports
 - a. Pol Comm (Kai Salem)
 - b. Providence Environmental Sustainability Task Force (David Veliz)
9. Reports from ECRI fiscal agency projects
 - a. Green Infrastructure Coalition
 - b. Energize Coalition
 - c. School Recycling Program
10. Announcements (all)

ECRI meetings - first Monday of the month at 5:30pm.

ECRI PolComm meetings - second Monday of the month

Approval of Minutes

- Paul Beaudette moves to approve, Meg Kerr seconds.
- Laura Landen correction to the last minutes: Add to the discussion – ECRI’s organizational members should bring an additional member to the ECRI meetings, someone who doesn’t usually come to the meetings. Judee will add.
- All in favor. 1 abstention from Fred Unger.

Office Report (Greg Gerritt)

- Balances: Ed fund operations (\$42678. 84); ECRI (\$33621.13)
- Tisdale awards are open.
- 50th Earth Day planning continues meeting on the 19th at noon at RIC if anyone wants to join us
- Video Festival is February 22 at URI; Call for videos and exact location to be announced this week or next
- Annual meeting June 1. Topic choices Port of providence or urban rivers.
- Discussion of meeting options – vote in favor of Port of Providence.

President’s Report (Priscilla De La Cruz)

- Priscilla has been meeting with groups across Rhode Island to discuss climate change: Direct Action for Rights & Equality; Latino Arts RI; food policy organizations; other climate organizations; and others
- Priscilla has attended equity workshops: Undoing Racism workshop and an Equity workshop recently
- Climate Action Rhode Island will be having a meeting this Thursday at which Providence’s Climate Action Plan
- Attending Providence Sustainability Task Force meetings for ECRI
- Priscilla shares reflections on attending equity meetings and meeting with other groups

Presentation: RI's Offshore Wind Energy Opportunity

~ NWF Offshore Wind Campaign - Nicole DiPaolo, NWF

- Offshore wind a clean energy resource that can be developed by protecting wildlife habitat
- Immense potential off the Atlantic shore of the United States – wind speed, continental shelf
- Regional urgency to bring new clean energy online
- Helps meet peak energy demand
- Monetary savings for rate-payers
- Jobs in offshore wind
- Local benefits for Rhode Islanders can be negotiated with PUC or developers
- Offshore wind should also be developed responsibly for wildlife – ex. Vineyard Wind to protect North Atlantic Right Whale
- Offshore wind development should be guided by science and comprehensive input, mitigating negative impacts at every step of the process – practice environmentally responsible development
- Commercial fishing has been an industry opposed to some offshore wind projects
- For recreational fisherpeople, the turbines have attracted fish
- Current US Offshore Wind Power Market: 22,240 MW committed by 2035

- Offshore wind policy to create a transparent process and make sure community members with a stake in the process have an opportunity to speak
- Nicole DiPaolo can be contacted if you're interested in working on the offshore wind campaign locally in Rhode Island

~ Regional Campaign Overview - Environmental League of Mass (ELM), Eric Wilkinson

- Eric is the general counsel for ELM
- Campaign message: offshore wind is the single biggest lever we can pull to address climate change in New England
- Goal: 12 GW of offshore wind committed by 2022. 6 GW currently committed in New England.
- The electric system in Rhode Island is part of a fully integrated New England system – 350 power generators with 30 GW capacity – want 1/3 of this to come from offshore wind
- Why a regional approach? Sends a strong signal to the market of offshore wind developers; region has common challenges; lower prices region wide; significant, regional action is needed to address climate change
- Existing collaborations: New England States Committee on Electricity; Coalition of Northeastern Governors
- Why 12 GW?
 - a) Power every home in New England
 - b) Retire dirty power plants
 - c) End fossil fuel industry's argument that we need more natural gas pipelines
- There's significant private sector interest; job opportunities in the wind industry
- Need organizations to work on central campaign to coordinate efforts: monthly calls, meetings, join lobby days
- Eric: ewilkinson@environmentleague.org

~ Discussion

- Discussion of supporting the campaign amidst this administration
- Discussion of wildlife: Offshore wind projects sited farther offshore, which minimizes disruption to bird migratory corridors
- Discussion of offshore wind disrupting fishing, harm mitigation for fisherpeople
- Discussion of coast guard, department of defense, and offshore wind
- Discussion of what to do in the worst case scenario of Trump's reelection and an administration that continues to be hostile to offshore wind
- Discussion of how to ensure indigenous communities and communities of color don't get left out of job opportunities provided by the industry
- Discussion of retail electricity sales rate offers from new projects (prices are getting cheaper and cheaper)
- Discussion of workforce development in Rhode Island – mismatch in jobs needed and people needed to fill these jobs – how can workforce development boards help
- Discussion of overall ecosystem analysis associated with the full 12 MW of offshore wind and needed stakeholder process

Reports: Policy Committee (PolComm) and Climate Crisis Campaign (Kai Salem)

- At the last PolComm meeting, talked about bills that ECRI members are working on for the next legislative session
- January 15: ECRI Coffee Hour – gathering at the state house to discuss environmental issues with legislators
- Early January – Climate Crisis training on conversations with legislators about climate change
- April 22 in the Rotunda of the state house Earth Day celebration
- Main priorities of Climate Crisis Campaign: new focus on justice and equity and new voices into campaign

Reports: Providence Environmental Sustainability Task Force (David Veliz)

- Task force that the city set up to be the community ear to the Office of Sustainability
- Meet every 3rd Tuesday at 4pm, public meeting
- 4 new members just joined
- Racial and Environmental Justice committee and Prov. Environmental Sustainability Task Force worked on the city plastic bag ban that just passed
- Working on initiatives to get to carbon neutrality by 2050
- Frontline communities are those that are going to be disproportionately impacted by climate change – it is going to be worse for low-income communities and communities of color. How to fight climate change in an equitable way is a priority of the Task Force.
- Task Force working to get direct community input to make sure frontline communities

Reports from ECRI fiscal agency projects: Green Infrastructure Coalition

GIC had an expo last week – it was packed, about 100 people were there

Reports from ECRI fiscal agency projects: Energize Coalition

[update moved to next month]

Reports from ECRI fiscal agency projects: School Recycling Project

[nothing to report]

Announcements (all)

Meeting adjourned at 7:04pm