

Environment Council of Rhode Island



Membership Meeting, Dept. of Admin. Bldg., Conference Room B
September 9, 2019, 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Attendees: Judee Burr, Mal Skowron, David Brunetti, Meg Kerr, Jerry Elmer, Hank Webster, Eugenia Marks, Greg Gerritt, Katherine Gibson, Sue Korte, Jeanine Silversmith, Michael Roles, Jim Corwin, Samy Amkieh, Priscilla De La Cruz, Timmons Roberts

Agenda:

- 1. Approval of minutes**
- 2. Office report (Greg Gerritt)**
- 3. President's report (Priscilla De La Cruz)**
 - Update on ECRI officers and vacant seat(s)
 - Former Energize campaign manager, Laufton Ascencao, investigation
 - Earth Day 2020 and DEM
 - Introduction as ECRI's President and brief meetings with state staff working on energy and environment
- 4. Presentation from Sunrise Movement RI, Samy Amkieh (30 minutes, includes Q&A)**
- 5. Reports**
 - Invenergy case update (Jerry Elmer)
- 6. Reports from ECRI fiscal agency projects**
 - Green Infrastructure Coalition
 - Energize Coalition
 - School Recycling Club/Triple M Productions
- 7. Announcements (all)**

Minutes

Approval of Minutes

Judee moves to approve the minutes, Meg seconds. All in favor. Minutes approved.

Office report (Greg Gerritt)

ECRI Financials:

- FY 2018/2019 Income \$23,781 Expenses \$18,545.87 Net \$5,235.13
Balance 9/1/19 \$35,161.30 9/1/18 \$31,934.17
- \$10,000 of income was contributions for the bond issue media campaign.
Expenses for the campaign were about \$8000
- Dues so far this cycle (starts June 6 with dues letter) \$6120. Budgeted \$6000
Budget for this year Income \$11000 Expenses \$10000

ECRI Ed Fund Financials:

- FY 2018 2019 Income \$31,085.06 Expenses \$39,883.31 Net (\$8798.25)
Balance 9/1/19 \$48,210.61 9/1/18 \$53,016.79
Budget for this year Income \$25,000 Expenses \$30,000
- We have money in the bank to compensate for a \$5K budget deficit, but we should think about other kinds of fundraisers to throw

Greg is looking for volunteers to be on the annual meeting committee. Please contact Greg if you're interested.

President's report (Priscilla De La Cruz)

Officer roles:

- Some officer seats need to be filled:
- VP Treasurer needs to be filled (Ken is currently filling both VP of Development and Treasurer)
- Judee will fill the role of Secretary and help someone transition into the role for next year
- Note: John Berard is no longer VP of Policy, Kai Salem is now VP Policy

Discussion of Laufton Ascencao and EdFund:

- Laufton has been indicted, hopefully this concludes our internal investigation of his mishandling of funds
- ExComm discussed response to state police investigation this summer, Jamie Rhodes gave us pro bono advice
- Priscilla will write a letter of thanks to Jamie

Discussion of Earth Day Fundraiser and DEM:

- It looks like the Earth Day music festival will not happen, but DEM might still be interested in doing some kind of earth day forums
- Discussion of sending a letter to Director Coit at DEM

Priscilla will be introducing herself to state officials as the new president of ECRI, hopefully this will generate discussion

Brainstorming new fundraising ideas

Revisiting outcomes of the retreat next year

Thinking about reducing meeting time to 1.5 hours instead of 2 hours

Presentation from Sunrise Movement RI, Samy Amkieh (30 minutes, includes Q&A)

Samy is a third year Brown student, worked with the Department of Health on refugee health, does organizing with Students for Bernie

Sunrise Movement is a youth led movement to fight climate change; movement to create a new political alignment

There is a hub in Providence – 220 hubs across the country

Decentralized organization, lots of online organizing

They had an action today targeting Senator Whitehouse and Governor Raimondo, highlighting the fact Whitehouse and Governor haven't signed fossil fuel free pledges, calling out the silencing of a DOJ report. Taking arrestable actions by sitting in offices. Some people were eventually arrested.

Providence hub was started at Brown, movement has historically been upper-class white folks. Wanting to fight for climate justice for everyone, especially focused on frontline communities living

Political organizing is a part of the local Sunrise movement (Alex running on the Green New Deal in Woonsocket)

Tactics: Sit-ins, marches, protests. Non-violence.

Using storytelling is an important part of the sunrise movement

Everett with Southside Community Land Trust getting more community gardens running – targeting middle schools

Interfacing with kids in juvenile detention

ECRI could play a role in building a Green New Deal for Rhode Island

Stopped meeting at Brown's campus to make it more accessible to people in other parts of Providence

Discussion:

- About 500 people at a Sunrise RI summit yesterday – Samy says it went very well
- Who are youth? Samy says arbitrarily 13-35
- Discussion of health as a struggle
- How does local connect to regional and national? National folks go all over the country. There's a national Slack, an online organizing hub.
- State legislators? Sunrise will be thinking more about this as the legislative session approaches. This is a great opportunity for ECRI PolComm and Sunrise to collaborate.

What are other opportunities for Sunrise and ECRI to collaborate?

- Resource of people who have been doing environmental organizing in Rhode Island for a long time
- Getting lots of people to show up at the state house, Earth Day
- Upcoming Global Climate Strike on September 20, getting as many people there at 10am as well – goal of 10-20K people showing up, stopping what they're doing and coming up. Want young people to tell stories, why this is an issue specific to me, talk directly to people's elected officials
- Will be more climate strikes – on Earth Day, after the Presidential election
- Think about striking at TF Green, easy to get to, makes news
- Discussion of whether it's a good strategy to criticize Senator Whitehouse, money taken from fossil fuel entities
- Sunrise should join ECRI
- Sunrise brings a lot of power, help get climate change on people's radar

Reports: Invenergy Update (Jerry Elmer, CLF)

“We decide not to address environmental issues because there is no need.” This is the first time the RI Energy Facilities Siting Board turned down any energy facility

Decision to deny the permit was made on June 20. Losing side has 10 calendar days to appeal after the written decision is released. It has not yet been released.

CLF believes that Invenergy will not appeal

During legislative session, legislation was introduced to re-arrange the EFSB to make it easier to site power plants – it would gut Energy Facilities Siting Act which requires there to be no unacceptable environmental harms; no requirement that facilities be cost-justified; adds Commerce department to the Board, and other changes that would compromise the ability of the EFSB to appropriately regulate energy siting facilities. This will likely come up again this year – be ready.

Is there a way to get a precedent set by this case – climate change wasn't part of their written decision, it was about need. Jerry says there's no chance this will appear in the written decision.

Timmons – this is unfortunate. Natural gas needs to be the target now. Getting utilities to transition away from natural gas.

Reports from ECRI fiscal agency projects

Green Infrastructure Coalition (Meg Kerr)

Retreat next Monday, Sept 16 to plan future work

There will be a green infrastructure coalition trade show on October 30 – Greg is seeking exhibitors and sponsors.

Energize Coalition (Priscilla De La Cruz and Timmons Roberts)

Coalition has paused its campaign and organizing due to issues with Laufton.

Using last grant from John Merck now – time to think about mission and future work

Having a retreat this Wednesday with a facilitator

Carbon pricing study is happening this year

School Recycling Club/Triple M Productions (Jim)

Completed survey to quantify food waste in Providence Public Schools

Lauren Carson's bill to mandate food composting by educational entities – a bill for ECRI to consider next legislative session

Anerobic digester in Johnston doesn't work

Greg will send around results of the study

How is the School Recycling Club going to send this message amidst the climate of schools with budget short-falls?

DEM has a list of everyone who has a permit to do composting

Announcements

Meeting adjourned