

Environment Council of Rhode Island



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

Attendees: Judee Burr, Ken Payne, Rupert Friday, Nicole DiPaolo, Mary Jane Sorrentino, Sara Canuel, Alicia Contelmo, Kendra Anderson, Laura Brion, KellyAnn Cameron, Helen Drew, Elizabeth Scott, Barry Schiller, Alex Kithes, Eugenia Marks, Angie Koziara, Gregory Schultz, Jane Austin, Mike Rubin, Kenneth Filarski, Katherine Gibson, Topher Hamblett, Greg Gerritt, Michael Roles, Sofia Owen, Kai Salem, Phoebe Chatfield, Michelle Beaudin, James Crowley, Sue Korte, John Berard, Paul Roselli, Laura Landen, Polly Barey, Paul Beaudette, Martin Lynn, Don Rhodes, Rich Dionne, Hank Webster, Meg Kerr

Agenda:

1. Approval of minutes
2. Office report (Greg Gerritt)
 - a. Finances
 - b. Fiscal agent reports from Chris Ratcliffe: School Recycling Club/Triple M Productions
 - c. Resolution for NWF on no new fossil fuel infrastructure
3. President's report (Meg Kerr)
 - a. Energize Coalition
 - b. Report on call with Senator Whitehouse staff re. marine monument
4. Presentation: Moving Beyond Business as Usual, CACRI Review of EC4 – Ken Payne
5. Reports
 - a. Pol Comm (John Berard)
6. Reports from ECRI fiscal agency projects
 - a. Green Infrastructure Coalition
 - b. Energize Coalition
7. Announcements (all)

Minutes:

1. Approval of Minutes

Polly Barey moves to approve the minutes, Barry Schiller seconds, all in favor. None abstain.

2. Office Report (Greg Gerritt)

- Annual meeting planning starts in earnest with a meeting on the 17th. Topic: siting renewable energy
- Compost conference will be March 14. Agenda is mostly set, 5 exhibitors have signed up. Greg is looking to give this project away in the next few years – RIC may take it over.

Finances

- ECRI 1/3/19 \$32,595.11 1/3/18 \$31,058.57 dues since June \$6040
- Ed Fund operations 1/3/19 \$47,165.04 1/3/18 \$46,925.25 YEA \$1310
- FA account \$199,809.47

Fiscal agent reports from Chris Ratcliffe

Triple M Productions:

- Parks video is finished. Premier on Public Television is April 12
- Chris has asked us if we would put on a public showing prior to that. Need a good room for a showing and then do invitations.

Report of School Recycling Project:

- Looking at 3 schools and evaluating their composting

Proposal from Chris Radcliffe below – this was funded

School Recycling Club Proposal

Americans waste enough food every day to fill a 90,000-seat football stadium ~USDA statistic

The problem with school food-scrap recycling is not transportation. It is source reduction and separation.

Estimated scope of problem

- Rhode elementary and school age population: 190,620
- Estimated food waste per day in RI schools: 76,248 pounds
- Estimated food waste per year in RI schools: 13,724,640 pounds
- Estimated number of trash bags per day: 3800

Phase 1: Establish the need for food waste reduction and diversion in our schools. The goal is to create a cultural shift among RI students relating to awareness of the food waste problem in RI and America, and the need for change relating to this important issue.

Calculate the amount of plate waste generated through elementary and secondary schools in RI per day and per school year.

- Random audits in 3 test communities (urban, suburban, rural): What is happening in the lunch rooms across the state? “3 bins” approach is not working. What types of food is being wasted most? Why are students not eating particular foods?
- Calculate the estimated value of school-provided plate waste (aka: hot lunch) and share the aggregate amount wasted each year.
- Calculate the percentage of food waste that is contained within the total school trash stream.

- Release results to the general-public through a PR event at the RI State House with a visual representation of one day of food waste at RI schools (ex: 3800 inflated trash bags or some other visual representation). The estimated amount of trash will be based upon an extrapolation of lunch room waste generated in the test communities.
- This will also serve as a launch for the RI Food Waste Recovery Challenge (final name to be determined). Rules and processes for this challenge will be created in step-one of the program.

Total Cost \$25,000

Phase 2: Execute the RI Food Waste Recovery Challenge with a significant prize (\$5,000) for the school that creates the best strategy for reducing and diverting food waste, keeping in mind that plans must be simple, feasible, and tested. Elements of the challenge include coming up with best practices for the following:

- Source reduction: Schools will evaluate the issue of source reduction, more specifically, analysis of menu choices etc. Some examples of strategies that have worked in other areas include the following:
 - Studies have found that serving lunch after recess can reduce plate waste by as much as 30 percent.
 - In the cafeteria, tactics like naming vegetables (i.e. “creamy corn”) can increase its selection by 40 to 70 percent.
 - Another study, from the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement, found that introducing a “healthy options only” convenience line increased consumption of those nutritious items by 35 percent.
 - If we know which foods are not being consumed, schools can change the menu.
- Diversion: Schools will come up with best-practices for in-school food scrap diversion in the lunch room since the three-bin approach does not work.
- Additional (potential) metrics TBD.
- School visits to the lunch rooms of contest finalists to review and verify processes.
- Announcement of the winner at a State House PR event.

Total Cost: \$25,000

Phase 3: Launch of a best practices food waste recovery website with discussion board options: Video content to communicate best practices to schools; Audits; Certification awards; Statehouse Events

National Wildlife Federation Resolution:

- This is the same resolution we brought last year – it was voted down last year and Greg thinks it will likely be voted down this year.
- Leave it open to amendments this year at NWF gathering.
- Paul moves to accept the letter, Laura Landen seconds.
- Kai Salem recommends that we update the language.
- Greg can update the language and take the resolution to PolComm for updates.
- Paul moves to table the motion, Laura Landen seconds. All in favor.
- Email Greg if you would like to help revise the resolution.

The current language of the resolution:

Resolution: No New Fossil Fuel Facilities

Whereas anthropogenic climate change causes hotter temperatures and ever more powerful storms,¹ threatens ecosystems, wildlife,² and natural landscapes,³ and puts human communities at grave risk, and Whereas the National Wildlife Federation has already stated that climate change is a clear and present danger to wildlife populations in its strategic plan⁴ and in its report “Building Ecological Solutions to Coastal Community Hazards”⁵ and

Whereas CO₂ levels in the atmosphere have risen from 280 ppm to 403 ppm in the last 250 years⁶ due to the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, and

Whereas communities across America and around the world are resisting the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure,⁷ and

Whereas electricity consumption per capita in the United States continues to decline⁸ and overall consumption has plateaued, demonstrating a reduced demand for new fossil fuel infrastructure, and

Whereas, energy efficiency and renewable power sources such as solar and wind provide alternative forms of meeting our energy needs that do not contribute to further climate change,⁹ and

Whereas climate models indicate that we have about two decades to reach zero emissions if we are to avoid the most extreme climatic disasters, and - given this need - new fossil fuel infrastructure will soon be made obsolete by the accelerating transition to renewable energy, resulting in stranded assets and unnecessary burdens on communities and ecosystems,

Be it therefore resolved that the National Wildlife Federation commits itself to seeking a complete stop to the construction of any new fossil fuel infrastructure including, but not limited to, pipelines, export facilities, and power plants, and

Be it further resolved that the National Wildlife Federation strongly supports efforts that reduce carbon dioxide emitted by human activities to zero.

3. President’s Report (Meg Kerr)

Energize Coalition

- \$4,000 of ECRI EdFund money allocated to get legal counsel to remedy the problems with Energize Coalition that have arisen
- Sort through legal issues and give recommendations to ExComm to change our processes to make sure this doesn’t happen again

Report on call with Senator Whitehouse staff re: marine monument

- Meg had this conversation – Whitehouse didn't support creation of this monument because of concerns from the fishing industry, now these concerns are amplified because of offshore wind development
- Whitehouse is taking a watch-and-see approach – fishermen are concerned about losing their fishing grounds to this monument and to wind projects

4. Presentation: Moving Beyond Business as Usual, CACRI Review of EC4 (Ken Payne)

- Civic Alliance for a Cooler Rhode Island, CACRI, has conducted a review of EC4 – citizen evaluation of government agency
- 5th anniversary of the passage of the Resilient Rhode Island Act – stopping point to assess what EC4 has done in comparison to the requirements of the statute
- Examined minutes and agendas of every meeting to assess what was done
- Met 10 times a year the first year, quarterly meetings since then
- Builds collegiality within state government, shares information, and overcomes silo-ing in government – these are valuable characteristics
- The statute says that annual reports are to be issued by May 1 and they are to include findings and recommendations – not once has the report come out on time, and not once has the report included findings and recommendations
- The statute requires that the science and technical advisory board to the EC4 have a chapter in each of these reports with an evaluation of the adequacy of state policies and programs to meet the goals of the statute, given the state of climate science. This section has not once been included.
- 2016 year – GHG Emission Reduction plan report came out to communicate how we're doing in meeting the targets
- Not going to meet 2020 goal because of new natural gas capacity that we've constructed in RI since 1990
- EC4 changes method of evaluation from amount of emissions produced in RI to amount of emissions attributable to RI electricity sector – this accounting change means that we are magically on track to meet the 2020 goal, by changing nothing but the method of calculation
- 2017 – EC4 was mandated to study the carbon tax, but it did not complete this study because it reported it did not have the resources
- IPCC and 4th National Climate Assessment have come out, but our targets have not been updated
- Executive Order 1706 – Gov. Executive Order pledging to follow the Paris Agreement. CACRI asked governor's office and EC4 how this pledge would be implemented, no answer.
- This political body is not asking the hard questions. Is that a deliberate outcome? Was the decision not to make waves deliberate?
- If we continue business as usual, we will not meet the 2035 goals. Right now, we have a system not designed to meet the goals and an operating system designed to keep the piece.
- This is not a sufficient system. We are not investing staff capacity into the EC4; they are borrowed from other agencies.

Questions/Comments?

- Paul Rosseli: livableri.org – find the report there
- What was EC4's reaction? They responded that there were extenuating circumstances
- Perhaps we should call a press conference to publicize this information

- EC4 meetings are open, it's good to go and give public input. EC4 knows that RI is not on track to meet climate goals; they have no idea how to do it.
- Conversation about the EC4 is a nice way to introduce the need for the Global Warming Solutions Act. EC4 passed under the Chaffee administration and Raimondo never really embraced it, it hasn't been a priority for this governor.
- ECRI helped form the EC4. We need to be more direct with the Governor to get her to support EC4.
- Discussion of the role of the governor, role of environmental studies, goals, enforceability, and the need for more direct legislative actions or a press conference.
- Meg proposes that PolComm think through next steps to Ken's presentation. John will put it on the agenda for PolComm.
- Meg also proposes that ECRI send a letter to EC4 asking them to set an annual calendar, which will help people come to the meetings. She proposes to work on it with Greg.
- Greg will send a link to CACRI's report

5. Reports: Pol Comm (John Berard)

Last month PolComm identified pieces of legislation that attending groups are working on:

- Waste
 - Disposable bag ban
 - Plastic straw "ask first" bill
- Energy/Efficiency/Climate Change
 - Global warming Solutions act
 - Carbon pricing
 - Appliance energy efficiency standards
 - Electric vehicle rebate program funding
 - Energy efficiency cap legislation (opposed by ECRI)
 - Offshore drilling program
- Toxics
 - PFAS in food packaging
 - Personal care products ingredient disclosure bill
- Water/Open Space
 - Renewable energy siting
 - Forest protection
 - Residential zoning density offset for solar development
 - Prov water monetization
 - Water resources board
- Miscellaneous
 - Funding for DEM pesticide work
 - Funding for DEM enforcement FTEs

Update from Kai on Coffee Hour:

Wednesday, Jan 16, 3pm – Coffee Hour – ECRI at the state house, in the library

We signed invitations for legislators, these will be sent and location of coffee hour will be clarified for them

Update on Governor's plastic task force:

John Berard is a co-chair of the task force

Multi-stakeholder coalition

Reduce single use plastic use

Tasked with making recommendations for legislation – governor wants a bag bill, on the same page as many members of the task force

Greg: in Providence, we're still trying to get a bag ban passed through city council. How will that impact state bill? John says state bill will be stronger than municipal legislation and will override them.

Are EJ groups involved? REJC is part of the working group, task force is prioritizing keeping equity built into the language

6. Reports from ECRI fiscal agency projects

Green Infrastructure Coalition (Meg Kerr)

- Received RI Foundation grant for the coalition
- Trying to get a stormwater utility passed somewhere in the state so there is a funding mechanism to support green solutions – closest to passing one in Middletown
- Maintenance of green infrastructure is an issue – working with city of Providence on Roger Williams Park

Energize Coalition (Ken Filarski)

- On hold in many ways while legal issues are resolved – some lobbying reports were inaccurate
- RI Manufacturers Association approached them with interest in the carbon pricing bill

7. Announcements

- Walk in the Woods, Burrillville Conservation Commission, Greg will distribute video
- CACRI: Learn the Facts 2.0 presentation coming up
- Submit events to the ECRI calendar
- Jan 24: CWA, TAC, Climate Action RI sponsoring a showing of “The Devil We Know” about PFAS poisoning water in West Virginia. Sign up on Eventbrite ahead of time.
- Intro from Mighty Earth
- Land & Water Conservation Summit is on Saturday March 9, registration is open
- Groups getting together to oppose the monetization of Providence water, at the Mayor's inauguration today to draw attention to it
- Citizens Climate Lobby RI will be giving out grants for young people to take climate action
- Climate Action RI members gathering folks for a rally to change rules in the House of Reps
- Water Resources Board meeting coming up Jan 18
- RI IP&L – Monday, Jan 14 beginning of a 3 part discussion on the book “climate church climate world”

Paul moves to adjourn, Greg seconds, all in favor. Adjourned 7:09pm.