

Report from the Plainfield Energy Coordinator-2011

Greetings to the citizens of Plainfield and best wishes for health, heat, and comfort for the rest of 2012, and into 2013! 2011 was a tough year climate-wise. We are all partners in the solution of a great problem, and that is how to reverse the slow death of our Planet Earth. We each have a responsibility to put our best efforts forward and make conservation and best use of renewable energy sources part of our daily lives. Put simply, we have to do better, for the sake of our own health and the future survival of our children. How do we do this? It can be the simplest of small steps, which when added up make a huge difference, not only in the money your household will save on energy costs, but the gift of healthy living you can give to yourself, your children, and your Planet.

Here are some simple, effective, steps YOU and your family can take today!

- Turn down the thermostat, or better yet, replace it with a programmable one which suits your lifestyle...saving up to 8% a year of your heating bill.
- Have your furnace or boiler tuned up annually. Keep flues and filters clean. Seal and insulate ductwork. Keep heat vents and radiators clean and cleared for best heat circulation.
- Keep the heat in and the cold out. Button Up your house by sealing leaks and adding weather-stripping and insulation where necessary. FREE DVD's are available upon request.
- Save on water heating by turning down the temperature to a comfortable minimum, insulating the hot and cold pipes at the water heater, installing low-flow devices on faucets and showers, repairing leaking faucets and water lines, and washing clothes in cold water.
- Save electricity by replacing light bulbs and fixtures with compact fluorescents, turning off lights, computers, and appliances when not in use, and reduce "phantom" loads by putting electronics on power strips and switching them all off at once. Shop for and purchase Energy Star appliances – you will be amazed at the savings, for example, a new Energy Star washer uses only \$11 of electricity per year!
- Invest in a comprehensive energy audit for your household or business. The typical cost is \$300-400; however, \$150 rebate coupons are available from me or Efficiency VT. You will be amazed at the potential for heating dollars and carbon to be saved. Put the recommendations into play, and receive a tax credit for certain items. Rebates, incentives, can be found at www.dsireusa.org
- Save gasoline or diesel by keeping your vehicle tuned up, tires inflated, slowing down and driving steadily, avoiding lengthy idling (idling your vehicle for two minutes uses enough fuel to drive the vehicle one mile!), combining and minimizing your trips, and carpooling. Parking your car and using public transit, (**particularly the US2 Commuter!**), biking, or walking are other ways to conserve fuel.

Some of the projects which the Plainfield Energy Group, sometimes in cooperation with the Marshfield Energy and Climate Change Committee (MECCC), and others have completed in 2011 and 2012 are:

- Ridership continues to increase on the US-2 commuter. Now to the point that a larger bus has been added to the 7:30 AM and 5:00 PM runs. As fuel prices keep rising, and winter weather is upon us, consider taking the bus. You can relax, read, talk with your fellow riders, and even connect with the LINK bus, and travel all the way to Burlington. GMTA is currently considering a mid-day run, but in the meantime, you can contact the dispatcher at 223-7287, and possibly connect with a Health Center or senior meals bus, which run mid-day during the week. or rising gas prices and winter weather, ridership will continue to grow. This is the third successful year of the CMAQ grant demonstration project, and our community-supported commuter bus is the envy and a model for transportation agencies across the state. I will be applying for a smaller grant from VTTrans to enhance the project. We have also been awarded a grant for a 7-bike rack for the commuter shelter pad at the Park and Ride. This will be delivered and installed this spring, and presents a great opportunity for green intermodal commuting.
If you haven't ridden the bus yet, be sure to check it out! The regular fare is just \$1.00 one-way and only \$.50 for students, seniors, and specials.
- I was fortunate enough to procure a new commuter shelter from GMTA, and with the help of Mike Nolan, approval of funding by the Select Board, and the help of many volunteers, a pad was poured, the shelter erected, and plantings placed by the Conservation Commission and PACA. Be sure to stop by the Park and Ride lot on Main St. Ext. and admire it! A bike rack will be added in the future.
- Through ARRA funding, the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission funded commercial energy audits for the Town Hall on High St. and the Wastewater plant on Recreation Field Rd. Following the audit results, we were also awarded \$3/citizen, based on the latest 2010 census, in the amount of \$5000.
- This year I also applied for and received a grant from New England Grassroots Foundation, (NEGF). This "Building the Power of Vermont Communities" grant originated from an earmark secured by Senator Sanders, and administered by the Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network, (VECAN). The amount of this grant is \$3000, and is intended to involve the citizens of Plainfield in a volunteer/educational experience which will benefit the Town Hall and by cutting the energy use, will impact the town budget in a positive way. Please be thinking about the skills you can offer to the Town of Plainfield in the completion of this project.
- Work continued on the municipal lighting grant this year. We are partnering with Efficiency Vermont, in partnership with Green Mountain Power to identify sections of town that may be over lighted, and preparing an estimate for conversion to more efficient and effective LED lighting

fixtures of municipal street and building lighting to LED technology. Early sign-up also qualifies the town for 12 hours of free engineering consulting service. An inventory of existing street lighting fixtures has been completed and we are preparing an estimate for replacing and redistributing the lighting.

- Ed Hutchinson, Bob Atchinson, and Rich Phillips attended a Photo Voltaic (PV) Installer's Training, sponsored by Green Mountain Power and Renewable Energy Vermont. If you are considering a PV installation, please contact one of us for more information and planning assistance.

Some of the projects Plainfield Energy hopes to work on this year are:

- Applying for grants and/or seeking American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding for more weatherization projects in the town, including the recently audited town-owned public buildings (particularly our Town Hall), and also private and commercial buildings.
- Continuing our close relationship with the Marshfield Energy Committee and partnering on projects such as weatherization and possible photovoltaic installation for Twinfield Union School.
- Recruiting more volunteers to continue our work, seeking status in the town as a full-fledged Energy Committee, and creating a web page on the town website to let others know about our work.
- Loaning Kill-o-Watt meters to townspeople to identify the largest electric consuming appliances in their household or business. These meters were acquired through a New England Grassroots Organization grant and can be borrowed through Ed Hutchinson at 454-1131.
- Continuing to function as a clearing house for information about weatherization and alternative energy, and providing opinions and advice to the town's administration related to energy issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Atchinson
Plainfield Energy Coordinator