

Report from Bob Atchinson, Plainfield Energy Coordinator-2013-2014

Greetings to the citizens of Plainfield and best wishes for health, heat, and comfort for the remainder of 2014, and into 2015! We are all partners in the solution of a dire problem, and that is how to prevent 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. If you heat with biomass fuels, such as wood or pellets, remember that efficiency drops when your appliance or vent pipe is clogged with ash or soot. This is also a fire hazard.
- **Keep the heat in and the cold out**. **Button Up** your house by sealing leaks and adding weather-stripping and insulation where necessary. FREE **Button Up** DVD's are available upon request.
- **Save on water heating energy** by turning down the heater temperature to a comfortable minimum, insulating the hot and cold pipes at the water heater for a distance of 7', 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 or LED's, turning off lights, computers, and appliances when not in use, and reduce "phantom" loads by putting electronics on "smart" 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, rebate coupons will be available from Efficiency VT via the Plainfield Energy Coordinator. 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.
- **Do you know that transportation accounts for 47% of the energy** from all sources, mostly fossil fuels, in the state of Vermont? **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 Team, sometimes in cooperation with the Marshfield Energy and Climate Change Committee (MECCC), and others have completed in 2012 and 2013 are:

- **GMTA US 2 Commuter and Park and Ride Improvements** Ridership continues to increase on the US-2 commuter, from FY12 with 74 boarding per day, up 19.6% to an average of 89.73 boardings per day. New for FY13-14 is a larger 28-passenger bus, and the new mid-day run has been added, departing National Life Montpelier at 12:05 PM, and Marshfield OSC at 12:45 PM. 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. For any special requests, you can contact the dispatcher at 223-7287 and possibly connect with a Health Center or senior meals bus, which also run mid-day during the week. We are now in the fifth successful year of this route, and our community-supported commuter bus is the envy and a model for transit agencies across the state. The 7-bike rack awarded from a grant for the commuter shelter pad at the Park and Ride has been installed, as has a second one near the kiosk in Mill St. Park. Each rack presents a great opportunity for secure off-street bike parking for green intermodal commuting. Bike to the bus, and either lock it up at the Park and Ride, or take it with you on the bus.

If you haven't ridden the bus yet, be sure to check it out! The regular fare is just \$2/one way and Discount Fare (Cash Only) for seniors/disabled/youth/in-town only at \$1/one way. GMTA also sells Commuter 10 Ride passes for \$16 and Commuter Monthly round-trip passes for \$67 for additional cost savings and convenience.

- **Improvements to the Plainfield Park & Ride**, besides the new bike rack, included solar-powered lighting for the shelter. Presently Ed Hutchinson and I are preparing specifications, estimates, and bid documents for a solar array at the wastewater treatment facility (WWTF), to power the park and ride LED's through a group-net-metering model. The added bonus is that locating the array at the WWTF will result in additional savings on demand charges.
- **Plainfield Town Hall Restoration – weatherization** – We are continuing to improve the air quality and health of this beautiful building with background ventilation, air-sealing the structure, insulating difficult areas, and performing calculations for the sizing of the heating system. Yet to happen in the air-sealing of the ceiling plane, the installation of loose-blown cellulose in the attic, and dense pack cellulose in the unfilled walls. **Please consider volunteering** for one of these installation tasks – it is a chance to learn weatherization techniques first-hand, and contribute and celebrate the energy and heating dollar savings for your town.
- This year, I will be applying for a second **\$3000 “Building the Power of Vermont Communities”**. There is an educational component to these grant awards in that the volunteers and members of the Town Hall restoration committee learned much about weatherization processes. Photos of the ongoing work are available, and will be on display at the Plainfield Energy Team table at town meeting.
- We have continued the **Vermont Home Energy Challenge** as a participating town, once again partnering with VNRC/VECAN, Efficiency Vermont, and local Home Performance with Energy Star contractors to conduct home energy visits in the town of Plainfield. Our goal is to perform

the energy visit, encourage the home dweller to follow up with a full audit, and then work with a contractor to install money-saving and energy conserving measure which will increase the health and safety of the home, as well. We intend to visit 3% of the dwellings in Plainfield throughout the challenge. If you have not had a FREE Home Energy visit yet, be sure to **sign up today** for a home energy visit, a discount on a full energy audit, and a coupon for a free “Home Energy Savings Kit” which includes materials and items for increasing the energy efficiency of your own home.

I am pleased to say that Plainfield Energy Team and you, our neighbors, have responded amazingly to the challenge, are currently leading the NE corner of the state in pledges and projects, and are in line to be awarded a **\$10,000** grant prize by Efficiency VT, to be used for weatherization of municipal buildings – (can you imagine “Town Hall” weatherization?)

Ongoing Projects and Partnerships

- **PACE**, property-assessed clean energy financing, approved by the voters at the 2011 town meeting is now fully-funded and was rolled out in late fall of 2013. The next round is available for spring of 2014. Other funding options for your weatherization or renewable-energy project are available – please give us a call for advice.
- **Municipal Lighting Grant** - We have completed Phase I of the municipal lighting program, partnering with Efficiency Vermont and Green Mountain Power, (as the utility company), to install a total of 37 energy-efficient LED lighting fixtures in the downtown square and fringes of the village. We spent many hours testing the old lamps, locating the new lamps, and are very pleased with the increased illumination and safety resulting from the new lighting. The old town-owned hi-pressure sodium vapor lamps were either 75 or 100 Watts; however, the new LED lamps, (purchased with E-VT rebates, final cost \$113 each) range from 20-30 Watts, and we estimate the energy savings will result in a 3-4 year return on investment, (ROI), with the better quality illumination. The lamps for Phase II, all of US-2 through the village, have been ordered to be installed this spring. We would like to graciously thank Starr LeCompte of GMP for arranging for the courtesy installation of the lamps on their new poles, and to Tom DeForge of CED/Twin-State Electric Supply for helping us to specify and order the LED units. Phase III will be on next year's budget, and will include the remaining lamps on streets connected to US-2.
- **Continuing our Close Relationship with the Marshfield Energy and Climate Change Committee (MECCC)** to partner on projects such as monitoring the solar arrays at the Old Schoolhouse Common and putting together a proposal for Twinfield Union School, a re-lamping project at TUS, and inviting solar companies to explore the possibilities of community solar in our towns. Rich Phillips from the Marshfield Energy Committee and I have been contributing members of the Twinfield Facilities Committee. A special thanks to the MECCC members for their cross-town sharing and support.
- Continuing to **function as a clearing house for information** on weatherization, renewable and alternative energy, and providing opinions and advice to the town's administration related to energy issues. Now that we have the Plainfield-Marshfield Front Porch Forum in, please post any energy comments or questions that you may have, and we will respond to them. As your

Energy Coordinator I am always available at bobat2@yahoo.com or by phone, 479-4326 or 802-505-3996

- **Recruiting more volunteers** to continue our work, seeking status in the town as a full-fledged Energy Committee, and maintaining the Energy Coordinator web page on the town website to let others know about our work. PLEASE consider becoming a volunteer member of the Plainfield Energy Team. We meet in conjunction with the MECCC at 7:00 PM, first Monday of each month, at the Old Schoolhouse Common in Marshfield
- **Loaning Kill-o-Watt meters** to townspeople to identify the largest electric consuming appliances in their household or business. These meters can be borrowed through Ed Hutchinson at 454-1131, or me at 479-4326. We also have **weatherization tools**, such as foam-sealing guns, and **diagnostic tools** such as an infra-red laser-pointed heat sensor, and a Solar Pathfinder to analyze your site for solar potential. Please feel free to ask for the loan of any of these tools, and instructions on how to best use them.

Respectfully submitted on 01/10/2014,



Bob Atchinson

Plainfield Energy Coordinator