

ENERGY COMMITTEE- 2009

The Plainfield Energy Committee was organized to encourage energy conservation and efficiency in homes, businesses, public buildings and transportation through education and community outreach. The committee met for the first time in March 2009. Thanks to the amazing talents of the committee volunteers, we had a very productive first year.

Community Energy Challenge

The committee's inaugural project was to join the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Community Energy Challenge which promotes energy efficiency and renewables in New England cities and towns. The first step in the challenge process was to "benchmark" or assess the current energy use of our public buildings, including town halls, libraries, garage and school. We were fortunate to have the assistance of Jim Potter, a University of New Hampshire EPA intern, who created a formal presentation that documents the "energy intensity" of these buildings and provides a baseline from which we can measure progress. See the Energy Committee page at our Town Website <http://www.plainfieldnh.org/towncomm.html#energy> to view this information. Our buildings compare favorably to similar structures in other locations, but our goal is to meet the challenge of reducing their energy consumption by at least 10% in the next year.

Plainfield /Cornish Energy Expo

A second project – energizing and exciting – was the production of the first Plainfield and Cornish Energy Expo which was held at the Plainfield Elementary School (PES) on October 24th. This daylong event featured workshops and exhibits on a range of energy issues and products and showcased PES's energy saving classroom retrofit. Dozens of volunteers worked to organize the event and provide education, entertainment, food and childcare for the estimated 175 visitors. It was a marvelous community effort and we are especially grateful to the administration, faculty, staff and students of PES for making it possible. For further detail, see Thom Wolke's lively description of the expo on the Town Website. We look forward to our second expo in January, 2011.

Promotion of Energy Efficiency & Innovation

Underlying these special projects is our goal of promoting energy efficiency and innovation in all aspects of town life and in all sectors of energy use – electricity, heating fuels and transportation - thereby reducing costs to individuals, businesses and taxpayers and mitigating the emission of greenhouse gases which contribute to climate change. The opportunities are abundant in 2010 and much of the work involves bringing information to the community for individual and group action. The Town Website Energy Committee page features information on topics such as home energy assessment and audits, weatherization, renewable energy systems, rebates and tax information, Energy Star products, local and regional events and educational opportunities. The energy committee welcomes new ideas and new members at any time.

Our vision for work in 2010 includes the following topics:

- Community collaboration, education and outreach through a second Energy Expo
- Improvement in the energy "intensity" of town buildings and vehicles
- Assessment and fine tuning of town streetlights
- Assessment, audit and weatherization of existing homes

- Promotion of energy efficiency in new home construction
- Electricity conservation through behavior change, energy efficient lighting, Energy Star appliances, etc. with a town wide reporting system to provide feedback
- Installation of renewable energy systems
- Planning for “smart growth” development and energy efficient transportation systems
- Supporting other initiatives which relate to energy efficiency and sustainability; for example, promotion of local agriculture and business, enhanced solid waste and recycling programs, etc.

Plainfield Elementary School and Kimball Union Academy

The energy committee is building on a solid foundation created by committees which were active before our inception. Thanks to the Plainfield Elementary School Facilities Committee working with the administration, students, faculty and staff, PES has reduced energy usage by 7,000 gallons of fuel oil /year and 39,000 kWh per year of electricity. And the KUA Energy Task Force, students, faculty and staff have reduced their energy consumption over the past six months by 14,000 gallons of oil, 183,000 kWh of electricity and 2,883 gallons of propane. The combined savings of these schools, supported by help from National Grid, results in a reduction of 405 tons of CO₂ being generated. Alternatively it results in a reduction of 2,205 trees being required to offset what they had been producing.

Submitted by
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A gathering of participants in the exhibits and workshops of the first Plainfield and Cornish Energy Expo, which was held on October 24, 2009, the International Day of Climate Action.