

## ENERGY COMMITTEE 2014

As 2013 came to a close, the Plainfield Energy Committee (PEC) learned that we had received a grant from the New England Grassroots Environment Fund to commission an expert evaluation of our Meriden Town Hall windows, and that Plainfield had been selected to participate in the “Solarize Upper Valley” program administered by Vital Communities. These two circumstances launched us into a very busy and productive year.

### **Municipal Buildings Energy Upgrades**

*Meriden Town Hall:* The windows project is one piece of the work on this building that began with an energy audit in 2011 and continued with a series of projects accomplished in 2013, including programmable thermostat installation, replacing an unused exterior door with an insulated wall, hot water pipes insulation, boiler servicing and installation of an indoor/outdoor temperature sensor. Calculation of energy use over the last two years shows a 34% decrease in gallons of oil used, adjusted for weather.

Using the Environment Fund grant, S.A. Fishburn, Inc. was hired to assess the Town Office windows and give us some estimates regarding their restoration both for maintenance and energy efficiency. (See Town website Energy Committee page for report.) Ms. Fishburn also conducted a Wood Window Restoration Workshop at the Plainfield Town Hall on March 30 that was co-sponsored by the PEC and Plainfield Historical Society.

Several preservation experts visited the town office in the early months of 2014 and provided the PEC with proposals for window and door restoration. These estimates and Ms. Fishburn’s assessment formed the basis of an application for a “Mooseplate Grant” from the NH Division of Historical Resources. We learned in July that our application had been funded for the maximum amount of \$10,000 which will allow us to repair and weatherize the failing upstairs windows and entry doors and begin restoration of the large windows in the main Town Office space. Winn Mountain Restorations has been chosen to do this work and will begin early in 2015. We plan to apply for additional funding to finish the repair and weatherization and upgrade the storm windows as well.

*Plainfield Town Garage:* What started off as a feasibility study on creating our own electricity for the Town Garage using PV solar panels has expanded into a full engineering assessment of the structure. This assessment showed that the roof and trusses are in need of repair and there may be other structural issues. This is no real surprise, as the building has not had major maintenance since it was built in 1983. Together with the Road Agent and Selectboard, the Energy Committee will continue with this evaluation and also make energy efficiency recommendations from an energy audit conducted in 2012 (available on town website Energy Committee page).

### **Solarize Upper Valley**

Plainfield teamed up with Cornish for the Solarize program which is based on the concept that grouping customers for a single solar installer is efficient and can reduce cost. The Solarize Cornish-Plainfield launch on March 19th was a sensational event, attended by more than 100 people, which demonstrated the renewable energy interest and enthusiasm of our townspeople.

In anticipation of the Solarize program, the PEC hosted a Button Up Weatherization Workshop on February 19th at the Plainfield School. Energy experts stress the importance of tackling conservation and efficiency projects before considering renewable energy systems for home or business. The Button Up workshop provided information on techniques and materials which can help save both energy and money.

By the end of the summer, solar panels totalling 115 kW were installed in 23 homes by Solar Source. Nine of these were in Meriden and Plainfield and 16 in Cornish. The number of participants in the program allowed us to reach the lowest price, so that the cost became \$3.40 per installed watt - *before* tax credit and rebate. In addition, 9 systems were installed by Norwich Technologies, ReVision and SunWorx, providing another 65 kW. So we have increased the solar arrays in our two towns by 180 kW total.

We expect to capitalize on the momentum created by the Solarize program to encourage more installations of both PV and hot water systems and to explore options for DIY systems, community solar, municipal projects and funding mechanisms to make renewable energy more affordable. In November we sponsored a workshop on Community Solar (aka group net metering) and plan to continue the conversation in 2015 as the State of NH finalizes the rules which govern these installations.

Thanks to our Solarize installer, there will soon be an electric car charging station at Anne's Country Store on Route 12A. Solar Source provided the funding for this installation to the Cornish and Plainfield Energy Committees.

As always, we welcome new members. This is a great time to be part of a town Energy Committee!

Submitted by  
Nancy Mojnicki, Chair