

Report on Sustainability and Climate Action Committee, June 2020-May 2021

SACAC, the Sustainability and Climate Action Committee, which has yet to settle on a shorter name, has been active, primarily for the climate, in the past year. It has perhaps a half dozen active members, who communicate with one another about current concerns and support one another's actions. A longer list of members receives special mailing about climate causes to write letters/emails about and notices of virtual talks or events about climate they might chose to attend. If you would like to join either group, you would be very welcome. Please contact Susan Millinger at millinge@roanoke.edu.

SACAC includes two members who work for the health of the Connecticut River and its basin (see the Connecticut River Basin InterLeague Program on page 16 of the 2019 Program Book.) This past year, as before, they participated in the Connecticut River Conservancy's Source to Sea Cleanup, focusing on the Fort River, and for the first time participated in a Lobby for the River Day, organized by the Massachusetts River Alliance (a coalition to which LWVMA belongs.) If you would be interested in this group, please contact Elizabeth Davis at elizabethd@whidbey.com to be placed on her mailing list.

SACAC has its roots in LWV Amherst's Energy Committee; given that committee's opposition to woody biomass power plants it was natural for SACAC to oppose the planned Palmer/Springfield large woody biomass plant. Martha Hanner spearheaded the members' efforts, which culminated with Amherst Town Council endorsing a resolution Martha had drafted for Amherst's Energy and Climate Action Committee. As you may know, the campaign against this plant was successful, but the Department of Energy Resources (DOER)'s attempt to redefine woody biomass as "renewable energy" remains a concern. One of the goals of SACAC for the coming year, following up on the suggestion of the members of the former Energy Committee, is to propose a strengthened version of the Biomass position adopted by the Amherst League in 2011.

Attention has recently turned to the issue of commercial solar installations. SACAC would like to see greater discouragement of such development in farmland and forest and more attention paid to the benefits forest provides. Several SACAC members are thinking about possible ways to provide education on the topic.

Throughout the year, SACAC members have been supportive of what has become the landmark New Roadmap Act. In May, the committee sponsored a webinar in which Launa Zimmaro, the specialist on Environment: Climate Change and Energy on LWVMA's Legislative Action Committee, educated participants about the Act and its implementation. That implementation is important for SACAC.

Sustainability is a major concern for several active members of the committee; particularly emphasized are environmental education, zero waste, and the well-being of pollinators.

Three members of SACAC this spring became members of EAAC, the Environmental Action and Advocacy Committee of LWVMA, headed by Launa Zimmaro and Karen Price. A main function of the committee is to educate members of the local Leagues about important developments and to communicate upward local environmental concerns.

Although SACAC members have not met as a group in 2020-21, the group has been busy. We welcome newcomers or returnees. Whether your time and energy limit you to the occasional email to legislators or you are able to be more fully involved, your contributions matter.

Susan Millinger, chair