We Need Your Help to Stop High Voltage Transmission Project

By Michael McDermott

There is still a threat to Vermont Township and to all electrical customers further than the eye can see. The placement of a 170-foot high, ugly, unneeded and money gobbling ruinous high voltage towers and transmission lines may be closer to affecting the town. Already residents are being notified by realtors that they must list the proposed Cardinal Hickory Creek line as possibly running near their property.

While there have been town halls and “scoping” meetings to meet and greet the public answers to the most important questions are yet to be heard and unless there is a different way of asking the questions we will still be kept in the dark.

What can we do to get better answers and to have any say in placing the Cardinal Hickory Creek line through Vermont and the Driftless area? One answer is in better questions, letters and stories.

When we say letters, we mean several different kinds of letters directed at different audiences.

We need letters of support for resolutions passed by many towns asking for more information and laying out some priorities for our energy needs. The Vermont Citizens Powerline Action Committee and friends have collected over 300 signatures supporting our Town’s resolution. The Committee will be seeking signature from the remaining town residents within the proposed corridor. Here is the section of the resolution passed in June by the Town Board that deals with investment priorities:

1. The Town of Vermont in Dane County requests that all efforts made to develop or enhance the energy system upon which our community relies and adhere to these energy investment priorities:
   a) Maximize cost-effective conservation, efficiency, and load management;
   b) Rely to the greatest extent possible on local, renewable generation;
   c) Support local ownership of energy generation that includes dispersed renewable energy to support the local economy, including the creation of sustainable jobs;
   d) Minimize the size, scale, voltage, and environmental impacts of electric transmission and generation.

Letters also meant lots of comments when Dairyland Power Cooperative was up to get a $25 million loan guarantee from the USDA. These have an effect.

Finally letters are needed now to our county, state and federal representatives. Ideas for these letters and addresses can be found on the committee website: http://vermont-citizens-powerline-action-committee.org/report1.html. If you like to use Facebook to keep up on events please Like our new page, find it at Vermont Citizens Action Powerline Committee.

What have we heard from questions and can we get real answers? In all the public meetings held by the developers, ATC, ITC and Dairyland, we did not hear a serious response to figures showing that because electricity use is flat there is no need for the line, nor that there is capacity in the grid for projected alternative energy growth. Perhaps most importantly the priorities listed above, conservation in building and use of materials, efficiency and load management as in “smart houses” or local generation of electricity will not be considered unless they are part of tower based distribution system.
We need better questions and better answers. To do that the Chairs of the Towns of Arena, Wyoming and Vermont have invited the developers to answer questions at a public meeting called by the town. We’re disappointed to let you know that the three developers ATC, ITC and Dairyland declined the invitation for our town elected officials. We need to bring pressure on these three entities to meet our citizens and town officials.

Finally, we can tell stories, stories about how we feel about our land, stories about being told we can't sell our property without disclosing the possibility of the CHC line and the loss of value, stories about how the towers will affect Vermont fishing, birds and farming, stories about how we would rather generate and use our electricity and yet save money. All these stories will help. The Citizens Committee will record many of these stories and will seek more. Tell us what you think.

As I write this I am looking out at our wintry Vermont Township landscape. We are beautiful now. We are beautiful all through the year.

I can only begin to imagine what 170-foot transmission towers would do to our landscape. I won't let myself imagine it. But that possibility could be a reality if we don't fight this with all we have.

ATC’s proposed Cardinal-Hickory Transmission project is simply not needed. The SEC data - the information that ATC provides - shows that Wisconsin’s energy usage has remained flat or has been in decline over the past 10 years.

Just recently, Ellen Nowak, Chairwoman of Wisconsin's Public Service Commission, validated our position on WPR by stating:

"Right now, there's not a need for a lot a (of) new generation of any source in Wisconsin," Said Nowak.
"Whether it be wind, solar, coal or natural gas. The current fleets are doing well to serve the load that's necessary."

Ms. Nowak shared what we've suspected all the time - there is NO significant need for additional energy in our state at this time. There is no need for a $750-million-dollar transmission project.

What can we do? We can write our legislators. Please take the time to do so. It's critical that we let our public officials know how important this issue is to us. Now is the time to inform them.

Please go on our website www.vermont-citizens-powerline-action-committee.org to get all the information you need to do this. You'll find addresses of our representatives and sample letters to use as a guide.

Nancy Cox, neighbor and concerned Vermont citizen
When Opportunity Knocks, Karen Carlock Flings the Door Open
By Dean C. Bossenbroek
Photo – Kira Amber

In her role as Town of Vermont Clerk, Karen Carlock has been active in running down stories and handing out assignments for Vermont’s Voice. When she contacted me recently to ask for input on article ideas for the upcoming issue, she was thinking of highlighting one of our many intriguing, talented neighbors. The first name that popped into my head was the person asking.

I suggested to Karen, that we highlight her. My reasoning was clear. From the way she’s transformed the Town Clerk position to purchasing the Ludolph property to establishing the Black Earth Children’s Museum to her imminent role as the Town of Vermont Board Chair, I believe our neighbors would like to know a little more about one of our emerging leaders.

I thought it was a pretty solid argument. It turns out Karen, albeit somewhat reluctantly, did too. So we met at her home on Highway 78 in the northeast quadrant of our township. While her nine-month-old son, Max, busied himself with Cheerio organization on the floor of the windowed rumpus room, Karen, photographer Kira Amber, and I sat on a comfy couches for a chat. I learned that there have been two significant moments in Karen’s life, which changed her professional path.

One thing many people notice about Karen is her energy level. When she moves around the Town Hall during Town Board and Plan Commission meetings, there is no linger in her step. She gets from one task to the other in straight lines, efficiently communicating with others as she goes. I am sure this trait was an asset during her five years at Epic Systems. Karen was employed as a project manager at Epic, a job that had her travelling all over the country three weeks out of every month.

Epic is notorious for the high expectations placed on its employees. For those individuals who meet those expectations for five years, a substantial once-in-a-lifetime reward awaits them: an all-expenses paid, one-month vacation anywhere on the planet.

Toward the end of her five years, Karen says she was on a plane coming home from another work trip, when a fellow traveler asked her what she did for fun. Karen gave the person a vague answer, but then continued to think about the question in private. She realized, “I didn’t know who I was anymore. I didn’t know what I liked to do for fun.”

Karen concluded she needed to start taking better care of herself. When she got home she told her husband, Aaron, whom she met at Epic, that she’d had enough. She resigned her position at Epic one week before completing her five-year stint, foregoing the once-in-a-lifetime trip.

Upon hearing this revelation, my jaw slacked open and my mind went blurry. Kira put her camera down. We sat in mental digestive silence for a few moments. Karen doesn’t seem to think such a decision was a big deal – it was simply the right thing to do for herself at the time.

When the Town of Vermont Clerk position became available in late 2014, Karen recognized her professional skill set closely matched the job duties of that office. She was appointed by the Board to serve out the remainder of retiring Mark Robertson’s term, and she subsequently ran unopposed in the 2015 spring election.

Karen immediately got busy improving the Town’s website. She updated how meeting materials are viewed by the Board, Plan Commission, and the public during meetings by projecting her laptop’s images onto a large screen in the Town Hall. She stepped into the role of Plan Commission Secretary. Her behind the scenes organizational work garnered the attention of most of us, who have spent any time at the Town Hall.
Karen’s enthusiasm for the job is undeniable. She says, “I love working elections, meeting the people” coming to vote. “Learning about zoning and planning has been interesting, and I want to make sure (petitioners) do it right. They don’t necessarily know” everything they need to do. It’s a complicated process.

Karen points out that a sizable portion of the Town’s annual budget is dedicated to maintaining the local roads. She chuckles, “I never thought I would learn so much about roads.”

Toward the end of 2016, current Town Chair Barb Grenlie made it known that she would not be running for re-election. In the absence of other candidates stepping forward, Karen recognized an opportunity to become even more active in town governance. She got her nomination papers together, filed them, and is running unopposed for Town of Vermont Board Chair in the spring 2017 election. Vacating the Clerk job will leave a sizable hole at the Town Hall, but she’ll have the chance to continue working with residents. Karen’s goals as Town Chair include maintaining transparent, fair, delineated policies for everyone no matter what a person’s connections are. Improving internet speed is a priority.

Last summer Karen and Aaron were on the lookout for local property to purchase. In addition to son, Max, they have two daughters – Maya, age 4 and Madeline, age 2. Grandpa and Grandma Carlock wished to move closer to the kids. When the Orbitec Corporation abandoned its efforts to rezone the Ludolph property to include a thrust reaction control device (i.e. rocket engine) testing facility, the Carlocks seized the opportunity and bought the land parcel and buildings. Aaron’s parents now live a five-minute drive from their grandkids.

The second consequential event Karen shared (walking away from Epic being the first) occurred on Highway 14 during the winter of 2016. Six months pregnant with Max, Karen, her two daughters, and a family friend were in a violently traumatic head on collision near Cross Plains. Tragically, the other driver died. Everyone in Karen’s vehicle survived with minor injuries.


Months after the accident Karen and her family visited the Upper Peninsula Children’s Museum in Marquette, Michigan while vacationing in da UP. She and Aaron hatched a plan: the Black Earth Children’s Museum. As owners of the former Premier Co-op Building in downtown Black Earth, they had been entertaining different ideas for putting the space to good use.

With Aaron’s interest in economic development and Karen’s dream of running a non-profit organization, a children’s museum made a lot of sense to them. They established a board of directors, attained 501(c)3 status, began transforming the space, and are planning to open the doors in June 2017.

As soon as she began talking about the Black Earth Children’s Museum, Karen became even more animated than she normally is. “I am really excited! The community has been soo supportive.

“You will be exhibits for mostly engaging 0-10 year olds. There will be middle and high school age appropriate workshops – photography, journalism, robotics, computer programming, art.” Karen is on a roll now. These “will be enriching experiences that open up career ideas. There’s not much overhead, so we’ll be able to keep costs down. The size is right because it’s not so big (compared to the Madison Children’s Museum). There will be a central parent area,” where adults may interact while keeping track of their kids.

According to Karen, 35% of children’s museums have anchored revitalizations of downtowns. For the Village of Black Earth, this is good news. Karen believes other businesses will naturally begin to fill in the gaps along Mills Street for local and visiting consumers.

To say that Karen Carlock is all in, when it comes to community involvement is something of an understatement. Maybe even a bit obvious. And, it is true. During our conversation she remained modest and was complimentary of others. Her curiosity about local concerns and the best interests of the community lends itself well to someone emerging as our leader.
Peculiar News
By Earl Brandt

2016 was a memorable year for residents of Peculiar Corners (County Roads F&FF)

Sale of the Ludolph farm
The sale of the Jim and Marlene Ludolph farm at the end of Cedar Hill Lane consumed most of the year due to prolonged efforts to satisfy both the Town of Vermont regulations and the requirements of the potential buyer, Orbetic Technologies. Once it was determined that the conflicts could not be resolved, the farm was sold to Aaron and Karen Carlock as a retirement home for Aaron’s parents, Greg and Janelle Carlock.

Greg and Janelle are moving here from their home in IL. Janelle has worked as a nurse for 40 years and is “excited to be able to enjoy retirement in beautiful Vermont Township”. Greg worked as a feed salesman until his retirement. They have 3 children - Amanda, Kyle and Aaron and 9 grandchildren. Greg enjoys gardening, canning and outdoor activities. Janelle enjoys looking for special antique items and spending time with her family.

A fond Farewell to the Ludolphs and a warm welcome to the Carlocks was featured at the annual Wild Turkey Imu Picnic, on Sept 11th, at the E&S Ranch on Cedar Hill Lane. The picnic is a traditional affair hosted by Earl and Shirley Brandt and David and Sandie Stanfield with help from nearby neighbors. Over 30 enjoyed meeting the Carlock family, including Aaron and Karen’s three young children.

Wedding at the Helmenstine farm
The most exciting social event of the year took place Oct 15 at Jerome and Jackie Helmenstine’s 300-acre centennial family farm on FF where they hosted the wedding of their nephew Benjamin Reeve and Elizabeth Cyzeska. Jerome is Ben’s Godfather. Ben’s and Elizabeth’s brothers, sisters, friends, and the Helmenstine’s son Dustin were part of the wedding party.

Ben graduated from the UW and moved to Chicago where he is employed by Medline Supply Co. Elizabeth has recently completed her Masters degree in Clinical Psychology.

It took nearly a year to complete all the renovations, including replacing the concrete barn floor, updating paint, improving lighting, and planning the decorations and props. It became a ballroom with seating for 200 guests. The venue was topped off with a rented hardwood dance floor, a DJ, a long table for the wedding party, and round tables for guests. It was transformed from cows mooing and munching to weddings guests dining and dancing. Rookies catered the affair which included a roasted pig with all the side dishes topped off with a season-appropriate pumpkin cake. Lawn games and a cigar and bourbon bar with a TV set to the Badger football game were set up in the back of the barn.

Ben’s cousin Daren, transported visitors to and from the wedding site to the main reception barn in a hay wagon pulled by Jerome’s antique W6 tractor. The guests traveled from five states and were provided with accommodations at the House On The Rock Motel in Spring Green. The couple rented a Badger Coach bus to transport guests from the motel to the venue. A most magnificent heated, air conditioned ‘comfort station’ was parked near the barn featuring his and hers compartments, mirrors, music, and sinks with running water.

The ceremony took place next to the old Booth House (reportedly one of the oldest original houses still standing in Vermont Township) on the Helmenstine property downhill from the main farm. A row of hay bales formed the background for the ceremony. When the time came for the ceremony to begin, the bridal party emerged from the barn taking their positions looking over the countryside. Once pronounced man and wife they quickly returned to the main reception barn to avoid the approaching drizzle. The event was a wonderfully memorable family affair.

Joe Schmidt retires
Joe Schmidt, professional flower grower for Fairfield Flowers of Dane County, retired in Nov. - leaving a bare, one-acre field at the E&S Ranch where row after row of beautiful flowers grew from early spring to late fall.
He lives in Madison but spent the last 20 years growing flowers in Vermont Township at the Vermont Valley Community Farm and later on the E&S Ranch. He was as much of a commuter as many of us, especially during the flower growing season. As such he was a Peculiar citizen.

At one time a bouquet of Joe’s flowers was included, on request, in the box of vegetables delivered to members, along with a copy of Sweet Somethings, a detailed description of the flowers and other interesting comments.

Joe was a one man show, working long days planting, weeding, pruning, cultivating and harvesting, often by lying on his belly on a contraption called a Dragon. It has tank tracks and is equipped with everything Joe needs without sitting up. He steers it with his feet.

He is also a living library on flowers and many other subjects and, to our delight, a story teller.

Tom Brock turns 90

Over 100 prairie enthusiasts, conservationists, friends from the UW, graduate students and neighbors gathered at the Pleasant Valley Conservancy Sept 10 to celebrate Tom’s 90th birthday.

Tom and his wife Kathy purchased land that was once a farm in Vermont Township on the corner of F and Pleasant Valley Rd. Farming stopped in 1955 and the land was gradually overgrown with invasive shrubs and trees. In 1997 work began to restore the land to what is now a 140-acre Oak Savanna. You have to see it to believe it, or email pleasantvalleyconservancy.org.

Tom is retired from the UW as a microbiologist of some renown. He has done extensive research on the subject and published many related documents for which he has been honored. His greatest achievement however was to convince Kathy to marry him. He does not walk alone. The Brocks do not live in Vermont Township but do own property, pay taxes and authentically support our stated goal “to preserve and protect our natural resources”. As such we consider them citizens of Vermont Township and Peculiar Corners neighbors.

Clerk’s Corner

By Karen Carlock

Be a Voter! There are two elections this year, and I encourage you to continue the trend of Vermonters who consistently exercise their right to vote. For the most recent election, Town of Vermont had an 80% turn-out which is fantastic and on par with typical turn-out rates.

The Presidential election certainly is associated with the most “hype”; however, each election truly is worthwhile to take the time to vote your preferred candidate. In 2017, Vermonters will have the opportunity to vote in two elections.

On February 21, 2017, there is a state-wide primary for State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Spring election will then be held on Tuesday April 4 and includes local elected positions. Vermont currently has candidates running for all positions except Town Treasurer. Please consider getting involved in this capacity.

Your local candidates on the ballot for the Spring election are:

- Town Board Supervisor Seat 1: Scott Moe
- Town Board Supervisor Seat 3: Todd Culliton
- Clerk: Chris Christian
- Chair: Karen Carlock

New to Vermont? Welcome! Please check out townofvermont.com for information on garbage and recycling, burning permits and obtaining a dog license. And if you have any questions, please always feel free to directly contact any of your Town officials.

Radon Concerns or Questions? A Radon Informational meeting is being held on February 27th from 6:00-7:00 p.m. at the Village of Black Earth meeting room. Zander Solutions, LLC from Verona will be hosting the meeting.
Please check your mail for a survey that we urge you to complete TODAY in order to support efforts to improve internet service in the Town of Vermont. As many of you may already be aware, internet speeds in the Town of Vermont in the areas that are served by TDS are weak. Last year, the Town Board coordinated a basic survey of internet speeds and collaborated with TDS on a grant application to the Wisconsin Public Services Commission. Town of Vermont was not awarded the grant and within the past year, service has continued to erode. Some residents are even struggling to obtain adequate telephone service.

Internet service is becoming increasingly important to quality of life – access to internet is crucial for our youth since it is often necessary in order to fulfill educational requirements. Internet access is equally critical for residents who wish to run a small business out of their home or simply work from home occasionally. For those residents who have less demanding internet needs, reasonable access to the internet is still an important issue for you as well as more and more of our daily activities move online.

The Town Board recognizes that access to reasonable internet service is a key issue facing many Vermont residents and recently formed a citizen committee with resident John Hallick serving as committee chair.

John has already been working hard on your behalf! The initial goal of the committee is to collect a much more comprehensive set of data from residents and approach governmental agencies with proof of the poor service and discuss solutions. Additionally, the committee is meeting with other telecommunication and internet service providers to discuss the possibility of having a new carrier in Vermont. No option for improving service is off the table, and we encourage you to get involved in this important effort. Wisconsin currently ranks 49th among states and the District of Columbia in the average download internet speed. It’s time to see improvement in the Town of Vermont and start a wave of improvements across the state!
How to reach us:
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Mission Statement: It is the mission of Vermont’s Voice to provide information about our town and articles of interest to the residents of our town in order to promote a sense of community, encourage participation in and understanding of town government, and improve communication among residents. Vermont’s Voice is a volunteer, citizen-run publication that encourages and depends on citizen participation in providing information, articles, or suggestions for articles, photos, criticism, and help with mailings. The cost of printing and postage is included in the town budget. Vermont’s Voice is not the official voice or viewpoint of the town government.

Keep up to date on town ordinances, meetings and other business at http://www.townofvermont.com.

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Chair, Barb Grenlie 437-5856
Supervisor #1 Scott Moe 767-4738
Supervisor #2 Mary George, 576-0905
Supervisor #3 Todd Culliton, 767-4145
Supervisor #4 Doug Meier 767-8860
Town Clerk Karen Carlock 767-2457
Or email: clerk@townofvermont.com

Town Treasurer Kathy Smith 767-0809
Town Patrolman Jack Schulenberg 437-5490
Building Inspector Johnson Inspections 608-444-0372

Plan Commission Members
Chair Doug Meier, 767-8860
Vice Chair Jim Elleson 767-3553

Secretary Karen Carlock 767-2457
Scott Moe 767-4738
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Mary George, 576-0905
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John Hallick

Fire Warden
Shirley Brandt 767-3030

Winter 2017

VERMONT’S VOICE

AGRICULTURE           GOVERNMENT            NATURAL BEAUTY

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