



Executive Director's Report

Presented at the 2016 Annual Membership Meeting

Over the past 12 months we have worked together to lead NEPPA through a challenging management transition. In that time, we have developed a comprehensive strategic plan, sought out new training and education opportunities, and better marshalled our resources to meet our needs. We have also hosted successful events including our Engineering & Operations conference, the Annual Conference, and Lineworkers Rodeo. I believe that we have also united both our members and our staff around common goals and are situated to push NEPPA to the next level.

Training

As we identified throughout the strategic planning process, education and training are core to NEPPA's value proposition. On May 18th, NEPPA hosted its first full-scale webinar on the topic of Power Supply with over 100 participants. The successful use of the Global Meet software is an important advancement in our training capabilities. While we have continued to experiment with webinars, particularly around continuing education, we may have reached the limits of our technical capabilities. We have also begun to explore the possibility of having satellite apprentice and technical programs in Vermont to service New York and Vermont systems.

High quality content and curricula are critical to NEPPA's ability to deliver value to its members. As we have worked to assess our existing in-house resources, it has become evident that we may not be the best entity to generate content. We have begun discussions with partners such as the American Public Power Association to identify opportunities to leverage their content and our connectivity with our members to provide superior service.

Our training staff is one of NEPPA's greatest assets and an area of continued improvement. We have recognized that the part-time trainers are employees and have fully integrated them as such. While we have not recruited additional training staff with the skills that we require, there are two candidates currently under consideration. We have also rolled out of the first iteration of our total quality management program, allowing us to collect feedback about each training session. All our eligible safety trainers have completed the OSHA training. Finally, we have had some interest from our affiliates in participating as trainers and have begun slotting them in to programs.

Finally, NEPPA is somewhat limited in the types of training it may offer because it is neither accredited nor licensed. The processes to achieve such status, however, are cumbersome, costly and unlikely to pay dividends given the presence of incumbent providers. Thus, we have once again turned to potential partners such as private and public education institutions to create some innovative solutions. Our objective is to form alliances that allow us to offer creditable continuing education and initial training to expand the available workforce pool.

Membership

Developing a strategic plan for NEPPA has been a top priority for me since the day I was hired. We assembled an excellent task force representing a broad cross-section of the users of NEPPA's services to provide direction and initial brainstorming and brought in an outside consultant to facilitate the process. At the end of September, the Board approved a comprehensive strategic plan that provides a clear blueprint for success. I am incredibly pleased with the outcome of our process and have begun working with staff and our committee chairs on plan implementation. I look forward to using the plan as the benchmark for NEPPA's performance moving forward.

The adoption of the strategic plan has also provided the opportunity to delve in to our committee structure as well. I recently contacted each of the committee chairs and asked that they plan to review the plan with their committee and identify initiatives that fall within its purview. Given his success developing the strategic plan, there may also be an opportunity to have our consultant assist with this important implementation component. By aligning with our strategic plan, I believe we can create a useful and productive governance structure for NEPPA.

Additionally, the Board also created a Policy and Procedures Task Force to update its Handbook. The Board Handbook has not been updated in at least 10 years and is woefully out of date. By recognizing and addressing this deficiency, the Board has taken an important step in improving its oversight of the organization. I very much look forward to continuing to work with the task force in this regard.

We have made several improvements in the ways we communicate with and reach out to the NEPPA membership. The look of NEPPA has undergone a significant upgrade, from our publications to our collateral material. We have consolidated our member communications to focus exclusively on Constant Contact for Newline and other emails, resulting in a much cleaner and user-friendly product, with an open rate well above the industry average. We have also been enhancing value for our affiliate members, and with a member of the staff focusing on membership, we have seen a dramatic increase in affiliate membership. Finally, I have spent time meeting with our members in Massachusetts, Vermont, and Rhode Island and hope to get to Maine, New Hampshire and Connecticut soon.

Administration & Finance

As a service organization, the staff is the backbone of NEPPA. It was clear from the very beginning that our staff resources were not aligned for success. The restructuring of the staff earlier this year has significantly increased morale and productivity. The more recent addition of an administrative assistant has allowed that transition to take hold and produce

even greater results. I will also be working with my senior managers on implementing a quarterly check-in process to replace our antiquated annual reviews. I am very pleased with the performance of the staff over the last year and I have great expectations for 2017.

Ensuring that NEPPA's finances continue to be maintained in a transparent and dutiful way has been a top priority. It was important that the Board adopt a policy relative to the IRS Form 990 filing that is now available on the NEPPA website. There is significant mention of our financial policies in the strategic plan and I am confident that we will achieve our goals. Once we have an updated committee structure in place we will be able to set about developing a comprehensive financial strategy.

Improving the NEPPA business systems is something of a perpetual project. We have completed needed upgrades to our office furniture, run electricity to our substation, and engaged a contractor to finally complete the confined space bunker. In the coming months, we will also be moving to an independent phone system, searching for new database management software, and developing an improved website. These changes should make staff more efficient and enhance the member experience.

We have also been taking steps to ensure that our resources are not at unnecessary risk. I have had several conversations with our legal counsel in the Georgetown case and believe that I have a firm grasp of how that is progressing. Bringing Diedre Lawrence in to advise us in this matter has certainly helped as well. I have also worked with outside counsel to develop a disclaimer/waiver that will hopefully help mitigate some risk moving forward. Though there is still work to do in this area, it is good that we continue to use our legal counsel as we require.

Conclusion

It has been truly amazing to not only serve as your executive director, but also to be welcomed in to the public power family. I am humbled by NEPPA's role in helping you to accomplish the work that you do on behalf of your communities. It has also been rewarding to see all our staff not only perform their jobs at a high level, but to also gain an appreciation for the members we serve. I am looking forward to implementing our strategic plan and working with you to achieve those goals. I know that together we can ensure that our members continue to see the value of their NEPPA membership.

