

**ORE Timebank Members Visit
Brattleboro Time Trade (BTT)
Annual Member Meeting**

Did you know that Onion River Exchange has a sister timebank called [Brattleboro Time Trade \(BTT\)](#), in southern Vermont?

As ORE members, we visited with BTT members at their annual meeting on February 26, 2017. This was the second year we have attended their annual membership gathering. It was exciting to meet other Vermonters engaged in timebanking. It was very interesting to learn more about their structures and practices and to see where their timebank is similar to ORE and where it is different. The meeting began mid-day with a snack potluck – though there seemed to be enough food to qualify as a full meal. We learned later that potlucks are an important part of the timebank's regular activities.



The gathering started a group exercise to get everyone talking. A BTT member facilitated a spectrum exercise, asking people to line up according to how long they lived in Brattleboro area, then how long they had been Time Trade members, (we were at the zero end of those spectrums), and then how long they lived in Vermont. Even for people who knew each other well, this produced discoveries and surprises. We found it interesting to note that everyone at the meeting had moved to Vermont, no one was a native Vermonter.

The official meeting began after they were certain that 30 members were present, a quorum which was required for decision-making. This is an example of how BTT is organized differently from ORE. The BTT membership elects the board and decides on any by-law changes (ORE as an organization has no members, it is the ORE timebank that has members). At least 10% of the active members must be present at their annual member meeting, and “active” means a member has made at least one exchange or “time trade” in the past year and has paid their annual dues. Led by the Board President, Tony Duncan, and the Coordinator, Maya Morales, the new board members were elected.

Former staff and out-going board members were appreciated for their timebank work. We learned that they recently changed from 2 part-time staff (10 hours a week each) to one coordinator (20 hours a week). They not only have staff paid the usual way (with dollars), but that timebank members share the staffing of the office and have taken on other organizational responsibilities (paid with time credits).

During the presentation of their 2016 financial report we noted the similarities and differences with ORE. Brattleboro has 300 members (ORE has 440 members), and their annual 2016 expenses were about \$17,000 (for ORE about \$35,000). Their membership fee is on a sliding scale of \$36 to \$60 per member (ORE \$25 per member) and in 2016 annual fees covered about 60% of their annual costs (for ORE less than 20%). To cover the rest of their expenses they hold several [fundraising events](#) throughout the year, raise a small amount of money through donations from individuals and do seek and receive the occasional foundation grants. They also have a scholarship fund, created by donations, to cover annual fees for members needing financial support. We thought this might be a great idea for ORE.

The centerpiece of the meeting was a discussion around the question “**How we come together as a community?**” One of the discussion points was how to effectively blend their strong community

involvement in potlucks and other gatherings with the practice of timebank exchanges between members. There were also a number of comments about the new importance of the Time Trade because of the changing political and economic climate. They discussed improving the time trading experience, encouraging members to do more exchanges, and building community beyond the timebank exchanges. It was such an engaging and vibrant discussion that it left little time for the final fun section, skill sharing among members (juggling, drawing, origami, jewelry-making, etc.). Eric practiced juggling bouncing balls and hats.

The meeting also included space for members to sign up for BTT tasks and responsibilities (staffing the office, potluck committee, future vision committee, edible garden committee, fundraising and other tasks for their [events](#)).

Before we left, we had a few moments to sit down with Maya Morales, the coordinator, who came on the staff this past year. Maya appreciated the opportunity to connect with people from another Vermont timebank. We brainstormed about the possibility of organizing a gathering of people from the four Vermont timebanks to get to know each other and share timebanking experiences and practices.

We are excited to let ORE members know that outside our Central Vermont group, there are other timebanks in our state with member having similar ideas about building community and exchanging skills and services. We hope that some of you will be able to share in future gatherings among timebankers in Vermont.

Dorie Wilsnack and Eric Bachman