

**Vermont Climate Council
Dec. 16, 2024, 10am-1pm
Meeting Minutes**

Virtual Meeting Option to Attend via Zoom: All participants (Council members and observers) use the following Zoom link: Join Zoom Meeting:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85611719993?pwd=6BnfcyKeGH7N7eU4bZHL5wP3yJm82.1>

Meeting ID: 856 1171 9993
Passcode: 701128

Climate Councilors present:

Eric Forand
Ryan Patch (for Secretary Anson Tebbetts)
Melissa Bailey
Johanna Miller
Jared Duval
Bram Kleppner
Richard Cowart
Liz Miller
Secretary Julie Moore
Chris Company
Michele Boomhower (for Secretary Joe Flynn)
Matt Cota
June Tierney
Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux
Jaiel Puskamp

9:55 AM Climate Council Members and Subcommittee Co-Chairs Join via
Attendee Link

10:00 AM Convene/Welcome/Overview and Approval of Agenda
David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute

10:05 AM Cross-Cutting Issues – Education, Workforce, Land Use
Liz Amler, Climate Action Office

- Councilors provided the following feedback:
 - This and other pathways will overlap with work being done by the Building Energy Code Working Group. The legislature enabled it for two years. See this year's report [here](#).

- For compact settlement items, we should look at new planning requirements under Act 181, including the new requirements for regional plans and future land use maps.
- Is there no priority action from the final pathway? It seems important.
- On compact settlement:
 - Are we doing enough to highlight the difference this time around given all the flooding?
 - It feels like the catastrophic events from 2023-2024 didn't happen. What does this mean for compact settlement? Can we be clearer about what we have learned from these events?
- Is there more detail/ can the word "support" be defined?
- Can we highlight specific programs that we would like to build up?
- Overall, we need to figure out how to prioritize use of funding on emissions reductions versus resilience, adaptation and recovery in order to invest in better compact settlement evolution.
 - The Council should listen to Chris Campany's observations about the need to steward our limited resources toward resiliency and adaptation.
- It will be important to cross-walk existing programs (compiled in RIS) with our priorities.

10:40 AM Agriculture & Ecosystem Subcommittee
 Jaiel Pulskamp & Billy Coster, Co-Chairs, Ag & Eco Subcommittee

- Councilors shared the following input:
 - Why are Innovation funding and payment for Ecosystem Services separate?
 - One is for a more established practices approach, another is payment for performance.
 - Why are there such specific funding amounts for a few recommendations? Does that stem from an existing proposal?
 - What about net emissions from other sectors besides agriculture?
 - We got a report back just on ag – which is a specific sector with justification for both types of accounting.
 - The Science and Data Subcommittee would want to look at this, if it is relevant to the inventory.
 - What about all the "shalls" in the language?
 - Thinking about the fiscal impact of some of the recommendations (i.e. incentives, increased investment, etc).
 - It will be important to do a cross-walk with existing programs, and explore whether existing funds can cover this.
 - Items that might benefit from more work include siting recommendations and more details about funding.
 - Why not call out Act 181? It would be good to note that successful implementation will help to achieve goals of these actions.

- The updated CAP should identify actions that relate to successful implementation of Act 181 and other recently-enacted bills (Flood Safety Act, 30/30 bill, housing bills, etc.). Is the Climate Action Office tracking these?
- Tweak the language to include an all-hazards approach, given that droughts and other hazards have physical and economic impacts on both agriculture and ecosystems across the state.

11:10 AM Public Comment

- Matt Lawless, Pike Porter, Cheryl Joy Lipton, Earl Hatley, Judy Dow, John Brabant, Alice Peal, and Ashley Adams offered comments.
 - Common themes included:
 - Take steps to stop the burning of utility-scale biomass
 - There is a facility that is requesting a permit near Linden, and they want to build 8 more. This is counterproductive.
 - Avoid phrase “working lands”
 - Concerns about shifting to net accounting for emissions (would obscure where the emissions are coming from)
 - Request to remove the requirement for periodic logging in Current Use Program
 - Importance of investing in weatherization and weatherization workforce
 - Appreciate the work of the subcommittee
 - Additional comments included:
 - Why cut a planning statement about thinking ahead about climate migration?
 - Likely to see a demographic shift and we should plan for this.
 - ANR is required to adopt rules around the emissions inventory, which hasn’t been done (as related to Act 170). It leaves the state vulnerable legally.
 - Related to compact settlements and river corridors, when people initially came to Vermont they didn’t settle in the river valleys. It would be a mistake to put up flood walls. We should move uphill instead.
 - Why didn’t we get started on this process earlier?
 - Community solar and solar on homes and businesses is the right space. The Public Utility Commission is disincentivizing home and business and community solar, which is concerning.
 - Consider that the requirement for logging to support the biomass industry is counterproductive to our climate goals.
 - Will the Council read the comments on all the actions, or just the prioritized actions?

- We have made comments about thinking beyond ag & forest – need to look at other parts of the land.
- Does the Council have any questions for a door-to-door study that will be done near the McNeil plant?
- We’ve been doing incentives and regulations for 40 years. There are good tools already on the books, yet the government is not implementing them.
- New community solar installations will not be eligible for net zero moving forward. Electricity would have to be used at that parcel or adjacent.
- Why aren’t we talking about energy conservation?

11:20 AM BREAK

11:30 AM Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittee
Andrea Wright, Chair, Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittee

- Councilors shared the following input:
 - Should highlight the needs/benefits of direct technical assistance to municipalities as opposed to having to chase grants for the same on a town-by-town basis.
 - Consider the RIVERS program providing direct engineering assistance in development of Hazard Mitigation Grant Program proposals.
 - A lot of communities are just now coming to terms with what adaptation and resilience really mean. As we engage with municipalities, we need to continue the education and outreach about what resilience and adaptation mean at a larger scale. We also need to pull these threads together in a cross-cutting way at the state scale.
 - Do a deeper dive into what this really means for communities.
 - Doing visualization for what this looks like for communities.
 - Is there an approach for the Council to think about financing strategies?
 - For this particular Subcommittee, there is no way to address all of the needs, so we really need to know what our priorities are.
 - There are many comments about this being not enough time, which undermines my confidence in what we are doing.

12:00 PM Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee
Richard Cowart and Melissa Bailey, Co-Chairs, CSM Subcommittee

- Councilors shared the following reflections:
 - On weatherization and heating systems:
 - Would a Thermal Energy Benefit Charge be an alternative to the Clean Heat Standard?

- Struggled to make recommendations while the legislature is still debating the Clean Heat Standard. One goal is to have a dedicated funding stream.
- ANR would not have funding for the additional study for at least a year.
- Need to understand the fiscal impact and how to handle funding.

12:35 PM Public Comment

- Alice Peal, Pike Porter, Judy Dow, John McCormick, and Ashley Adams offered comments that included:
 - Concerns related to multi-modal transportation initiatives. There is a plan for an active transportation corridor to go through the Mad River Valley. Planners need to be familiarized completely with the natural habitat and flood zone area.
 - Consider the health impacts of possible solutions. For instance, wood heat has health costs.
 - There was not one mention of the impacts of biomass burning. If you look at the one-mile radius around McNeil, there are clear impacts (i.e. younger people being hospitalized for COPD and asthma).
 - Municipal Electric Utility has said it is difficult to find clean replacement energy. The Public Service Department should help negotiate on behalf of municipal entities for procuring clean offshore wind power.
 - Transportation should also account for vehicles related to logging and all impacts related to biomass.
 - Was there any consideration around the 5-month waiting period to get heat pumps cleaned? And that the minimum cost is \$400 per unit?
 - Cap and Invest will increase fuel costs for people who can't afford to switch.
 - It is better to focus on weatherization assistance programs, increase salaries of workers, and take other steps.
 - Why do we continue to prop up McNeil and Rygate? It's expensive.
 - Clean Heat Standard should be discarded. Incentivizes wood burning and burdens low-income people.

12:45 PM Final Reflections

- Councilors shared the following reflections:
 - This is Bram's last Council meeting.
 - Balancing emissions reductions with resilience. Keep in mind this generation's and future generations' needs.
 - Emphasis should be on keeping people safe.

12:55 PM Next Steps

1:00 PM Adjourn

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