

Vermont Climate Council
In-Person Meeting - Waterbury, VT
January 29, 2024
Meeting Summary

In Person:

Fox Conference Room - Waterbury State Office Complex 280 State Drive, Waterbury, Vermont

With Virtual Meeting Option to Attend via Zoom:

Meeting recording is available www.climatechange.vermont.gov

Councilor Attendance:

In person: Julie Moore, Kristin Clouser, Ryan Patch (designee of Anson Tebbetts), Mark Levine, Michelle Boomhower (designee of Joe Flynn), Melissa Bailey (designee of June Tierney), Jared Duval, Kelly Klein, Allie Webster, Denise Bailey, Jaiel Pulskamp, Lily Weinstein Terry, Peter Sterling, Bram Kleppner, Liz Miller, Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux, Johanna Miller, Richard Cowart

Online: Paula Melton, David Deen, Eric Forand

9:00 AM Convene/Welcome/Overview and Approval of Agenda/Approval of Minutes
Kristin Clouser, Agency of Administration & David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute

- Agenda and Minutes Approved by Council

9:05 AM Connecting Exercise
David Plumb, CBI

- Round 1 question: *What lived experience do you have that helps to explain your interest in climate action?*
- Round 2 question: *Imagine its July 2025 and you're proud of the revised Climate Action Plan. What aspects of the plan make you most hopeful about Vermont's future? Why?*

Discussion: Councilors answered the questions in small groups. Some notable responses to the second question included:

- *Measurable goals*
- *Equitable outcomes*
- *A future with solar panels on the roofs of all the big box stores...as well as schools*

9:30 AM National Climate Assessment and its Implications for Vermont
Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux, Vermont State Climatologist
<https://nca2023.globalchange.gov/>

- Dr. Leslie-Ann Dupigny-Giroux’s provided an [overview](#)¹ of the recently released Nation Climate Assessment. She noted some of the new elements in the 2023 assessment, including increased understanding of observed and projected climate change, an economics and social systems section, a justice section, environmental justice and equity as cross-cuts, local and state climate mitigation and adaptation, the arts, and a NCA Atlas.

10:00 AM Vermont Emissions Analysis and Technical Work Update
Jared Duval, Councilor and Energy Action Network; and Brian Woods, Climate Action Office

- Jared Duval presented an [analysis](#)² that compared Vermont’s emissions inventory to recent updated modeling of future emissions, as well as to leading indicators, such as fuel sales. He encouraged the Council and the state to use assumptions and inputs in its modeling that are the same as those in the official inventory, as well as to calibrate modeling based on the latest hard data from inputs such as fuel sales. He also encouraged pathways modeling to produce a range of potential future outcomes, with confidence levels in those different outcomes.
- Brian Woods [explained](#)³ the Low Emissions Analysis Platform modeling the state is conducting with consultant support. The modeling allows the state to reasonably assume where emissions will be in the future based on policies currently in place.
- Discussion: Councilors had the following questions and comments
 - In all scenarios, we’re still far away from meeting out 2050 emissions goals
 - Are there standard or best practices in calculating the inventory and emissions modeling (Answer: yes, and Vermont includes detailed methodology descriptions in its reports)
 - Can the LEAP model produce results that show multiple potential outcomes with different levels of uncertainty. (Answer: That kind of probability analysis goes beyond what the state has contracted)
 - An emissions source such as agriculture will likely rise if Vermont grows more of its own food, while Vermont’s inventory won’t reflect the saved emissions from less food purchased from out of state.

10:40 AM BREAK

¹ https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared%20Documents/Dupigny-Giroux_National%20Climate%20Assessment%20and%20VCC_29Jan2024.pdf

² https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared_Documents/JaredDuvalClimateCouncilPresentation01_29_24.pdf

³ https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared%20Documents/2024_0129_climate_council_pathways.pdf

11:00 AM Progress Report on Initial Climate Action Plan and Climate Action Office Update
Jane Lazorchak, Climate Action Office

- Jane Lazorchak provided an [update](#)⁴ on Climate Action Office activities and implementation of the Initial Climate Action Plan (Initial CAP).
- David Plumb led Councilors through an exercise to (re)acquaint them with the 200+ actions in the Initial CAP, using a [summary table](#)⁵ of actions. In the discussion after the exercise, Councilors noted:
 - For the update to the CAP, the Council should find better ways to signal its priorities. 200+ actions are dizzying and make it hard to focus on the most urgent items to implement.
 - The State Hazard Mitigation Plan had 110 actions, prioritized 43 of them, then signaled the top 10 that needed immediate attention. All the actions stayed in the report.
 - The table of actions is a good summary. Additional information would be helpful, such as:
 - What’s really happening with the actions labeled “Need more information”
 - How much budget is being / has been dedicated; who is leading implementation, etc.
 - The table doesn’t include some implementation that is already underway

11:45 PM State Hazard Mitigation Plan & Other Essential Resilience/Adaptation Updates
Stephanie Smith, State Hazard Mitigation Officer and Marian Wolz, Climate Action Office

- Stephanie Smith presented an [overview](#)⁶ of the state’s most recent Hazard Mitigation Plan and the process used to develop it.

12:30 PM LUNCH

1:00 PM PUBLIC COMMENT

- The following members of the public made comment:
 - Annette Smith
 - Alice Peal
- Questions and key points of the comments made included:

⁴ https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared%20Documents/Council_Update_January_2024.pdf

⁵ https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared%20Documents/CAPActionProgress_1-29-24VCCMeeting.pdf

⁶ https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared%20Documents/2023%20SHMP%20%26%20RIS_VCC%20012924.pdf

- The Global Warming Solutions Act is too focused on emissions reductions. What actions in the CAP address flooding?
- If it's clear Vermont is not going to hit the emissions targets, then why not go back to the legislature and remove those requirements before the state gets sued?
- Need to identify areas for potential hazard mitigation
- Emergency Readiness Center - has been activated three times this past year
- There's not enough emphasis regarding the importance of wetlands when it comes to climate resilience

1:30 PM Review of Likely Gaps, Requirements, and Timeline for Updating the CAP
David Plumb, CBI and Jane Lazorchak, Climate Action Office

- Jane Lazorchak provided an [overview](#)⁷ of requirements on the Council in the Global Warming Solutions Act and reviewed the gaps identified in the Initial Climate Action Plan. David Plumb provided an overall work plan and timeline to develop a revised Climate Action Plan.

2:00 PM Climate Action Plan Support
Julie Moore, Agency of Natural Resources

- Secretary Julie Moore described the [financial and staff support](#)⁸ that the Agency of Natural Resources will provide the Council to update the CAP.
- Councilors expressed concern that the process will likely need more staff support than what the agency plans to provide.

2:15 PM Just Transitions Principles and Strategies to Weave Equity Considerations into the Process
Just Transitions Co-chairs

- Kelly Klein and Abby Willard provided a [recommended approach](#)⁹ coming out of the Just Transitions Subcommittee to center equity in the development of the updated CAP.

2:30 PM Topic-specific Breakout Conversations to Orient Sub-Committee Work
David Plumb, CBI

⁷https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared%20Documents/CAP_Gaps_Updates_Timeline_2024.pdf

⁸ https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared%20Documents/Council_Budget_Update.pdf

⁹

<https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared%20Documents/Suggestions%20for%20Centering%20Equity%20in%20the%20Work%20of%20the%20VT%20Climate%20Council.pdf>

- David Plumb led Councilors through two rotations of sub-committee specific conversations. The orienting question was, *What are the specific priority topics that require an investment of our time to achieve an updated CAP?*

- *Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee – Transportation Priorities*
 - Finalize study/analysis of policy options for transportation
 - Conduct stakeholder participation
 - Given Counselors have day jobs, how do we maximize conversations to advance work faster and more efficiently
 - Specificity of implications of a cap-and-invest program
 - Consult with this subcommittee on the study
 - Not critical for task group to view/vet RFP deliverables if the subcommittee reviews, but likely need sector leads for drafting
 - **Policy** is the key to long term revenue
 - Gas tax increase administratively simpler? 2019 study?
 - Complementary regulations
 - Economy-wide analysis

- *Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee – Thermal Gaps*
 - Consider setting a money-specific (to all sectors) energy-burden reduction goal (e.g. no more than 6% of income on energy cost)
 - Tie this to the MAP tool
 - Low-income payer reduction payment program:
 1. Create a cap on what they pay
 2. For electric sector
 - Tariff on Bill financing - Move to implementation
 1. Subsidize transition for low-income Vermonters - 100%
 - Workforce development/training
 1. Solar workforce - Can we piggyback for heat pump deployment

- *Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee – Additional considerations*
 - How do we deal with the process for cross cutting solutions?
 - Need to further prioritize existing actions before adding new ones
 - Re-structure handout by subcommittee as a tool to advance priority work
 - What can we learn from the thermal sector as we consider the transportation policy?
 - Transparency around cost
 - Engagement is the key to transparency
 - Clearly speak to costs/benefits to Vermonters as different from societal costs/benefits
 - Are we going to focus on everything, or on fewer more impactful actions?
 - Where are all the other, smaller recommendations? How and do we prioritize?

- Calibrate where we need to be - what are our targets?
 - Complimentary policy framework
 1. How do we establish that for sectors like transportation and buildings and thermal?
 2. Need to review where we are for each sector
 - Clean Heat Standard is policy for thermal but complementary requirements needed?
 - ACCII and ACT is regulation for transportation, but no policy exists
 - No regulation for other fossil fuel equipment exists
 - Explore cap-and-invest funding and bring the returns to low income Vermonters
 - Start-up costs are real and need to be considered (the cost to Vermonters)
 - Stay realistic about administrative burden
 - How do we consider gross emissions reductions for agriculture?
 - Ag&Eco is focused on net emissions
 - Specific pathways for enteric fermentation?
 - Cross pollination between Ag&Eco and Cross Section Mitigation
 - Incorporate consumption-based inventory into a narrative
 - Cost/ton emissions to advance/prioritize recommendations
 - Refrigerant management
 - Question assumptions and build into a model
 - Understand the implications of PFAS and heat pumps
- *Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittee*
 - Establish quantitative goals for measuring resilience and build on that
 - Fold in response to Speaker's letter (articulating clear priorities)
 - Support municipalities in terms of:
 1. Weather related resilience
 2. Climate migration
 - Land use/Land use policy at the intersection of this subcommittee and Ag&Eco
 1. Broad need
 2. Compact settlement
 3. Education and outreach
 - Planning vs. Implementation
 - Ensure smaller communities are able to handle implementation
 - Learn - Plan – Act
 - Need resources in order to do each of these
 - Work on the overlap with other subcommittees
 - How emissions reductions recommendations land with rural communities
 - Landscape vs. Community vs. Individual-level Resilience
 - What does success look like?
 - How to group strategies and organize our actions to reflect how voters place themselves in this work
 - Consider the timeline (horizon line) needed to achieve desired outcome
 - Need for adaptive capacity: Cascading emergencies/Needs

- Flooding: Planning vs. Implementation
 - Working together in tandem - Communication across departments and committees
 - Measuring and Assessment tool - Measuring progress across GWSA
 - List of metrics needed
 - Timeline for measurements
 - Need representation from the larger communities (i.e. Rutland, Burlington)
 - Calculating costs: include mental and physical health
- *Agriculture & Ecosystem Subcommittee:*
 - Overarching goals
 - Fewer emissions
 - More sequestration
 - More resilience
 - 3 buckets of actions:
 - Farm/forestry viability
 - Flooding in 2023 devastated the state with over \$40 million in uncompensated losses to farmers. What can and needs to be done to recover?
 - Farm/forestry practices
 - Sequestration and emissions reductions opportunities
 - Natural lands
 - Prioritization is needed
 - Natural lands and forestry experience is needed
 - The challenge of trying to balance priorities: housing / managed forests / wetlands & nature / agriculture

4:00 PM Plenary Wrap-Up and Next Steps
David Plumb, CBI

4:30 PM Adjourn