

Vermont Climate Council October 12, 2021 -Minutes

Date/Time: October 12, 2021, 1:30 PM
Location: Zoom Meeting; [Recording Posted Online](#)
Physical Location to Attend in Person: Agency of Natural Resources, One National Life Drive, Montpelier, VT 05602 in Catamount NL D215
Vermont Climate Council members: Abbie Corse, Anson Tebbetts, Brian Gray, Bram Kleppner, Catherine, Dimitruk, Chad Farrell, Chris Campy, Chris Cochran, Iris Hsiang, Jared Duval, Johanna Miller, Joe Flynn, Julie Moore, June Tierney, Kelly Klein, Lauren Oates, Liz Miller, Richard Cowart, Sean Brown, Sue Minter, Susanne Young
Sub-committee co-chairs: Peter Walke, Billy Coster
Staff and support: Jane Lazorchak, Marian Wolz, David Plumb, Cameron Hager, David Hill, Kiah Morris
Minutes By: David Plumb, Cameron Hager

1:30 PM Convene/Welcome/Overview and Approval of Agenda
Secretary Susanne Young, Agency of Administration

Agenda was approved by the Council.

1:35 PM Review and Approval of [Oct. 5, 2021 minutes](#)
David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute

Minutes were approved by the Council.

1:40 PM Open Discussion on Equity Considerations in Work of Subcommittees and Council
All

David Plumb led a discussion on reflections that Council members had around equity, as the Sub-Committees prepared to do their detailed equity analysis. Summary of the discussion is recorded below:

- In our initial Climate Action Plan, the work done by the Council is taking place in, and affecting, indigenous land and therefore should include a land acknowledgement. This should be a process that is informed by the indigenous community. Council members suggested working with Judy Dow from the Ag and Eco subcommittee and Beverly Little Thunder from Just Transitions as resources.
- Question: Due to equity screen, how do we elevate equity even though we are doing the prioritization on other issues first before the equity screening?
 - While we haven't formally run things through equity screen, this is high on

people's awareness in this process. In the development of major ideas, equity considerations have been front and center from the beginning. Looking forward to process of applying the rubric. The council is starting from a foundation.

- Equity is built into the definitions of co-benefits and cost-effectiveness as well, but, of course, not to the same level as the rubric.
- Still, the analytical prioritization requirements have the potential to force equity related actions aside and may require going back to the drawing board in the weeks ahead.
- There is a distinct sense that the council is not yet hearing from a representative cross-section in Vermont. The council should invest with a heightened duty to be mindful that we've heard from many people, but we haven't heard from everyone.
 - This is the beginning of a process. We should acknowledge that, and the likelihood we haven't reached a broad group yet.
- The Council should remember as well that this is a global problem. The people who are affected the most aren't even here at all. It's important to remember that it isn't just about us, Vermont. The council is acting on behalf of the global community.

2:00 PM Decision-making by the Council
David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute

David Plumb led a discussion on the [Decision-making protocol](#). Council agreed to move forward with this version of the document. While agreeing to move forward, councilors also expressed the following concerns:

- Let's be careful about achieving a false consensus, or a consensus from exhaustion. There must be reality behind the consensus. If we can't reach consensus, let's be prepared to vote. The council should apply these steps carefully to avoid decisional traffic jams.
- Correct the typo in the document: Real team, should be real time voting

2:10 PM Non-Energy Sector Draft Actions Presentation
Peter Walke, Cross-Sector Mitigation Co-Chair

Cross-Sector Mitigation Co-Chair Peter Walke presented on Non-Energy Sector draft actions. All comments focused on the issue of proportionality of reductions. The council discussed [questions and comments](#) related to draft actions as noted below:

- Questions of proportionality- statute creates reduction requirements, but doesn't say that those start dates are necessarily the right dates for calculating proportionality.
 - We could use 2018 or now. Some sectors have had significant changes since 1990
 - Proportionality supports discipline, but for a variety of reasons, we might not be exact.
- It was noted that, for instance, without clarification of the refrigerant management, we would run into some significant, unintended consequences in rule making.

- The council will make an action team to look at this. Please reach out to Peter with coordination with Jane and Marian to carry this forward on specific asks
 - Request from council members to create a list or sheet of Pros/Cons on what is being proposed as well as alternative ways of looking at it. This would help what the Council is deciding on.
- Additional detail from the chat: We have tried to discuss the issue that Peter is raising in the Science & Data subcommittee, but we have been backlogged with other emerging issues. That said, my current thinking on this question is: The baseline year against which we measure our out-year emissions reduction requirements (2005 for 2025 requirements; 1990 for 2030 and 2050 requirements) is clearly laid out in statute. However, the reference year that we use to assess this "relative contribution" question is not laid out in statute. I don't think we need to (or should) conflate these questions by defaulting to use either 1990 or 2005 re: "relative contributions" by sector. Here's some of my rationale:
 - 1. The latest available data after the GWSA went into effect and that is presently at hand while we are working on the first CAP is 2018 data. Why not use the reference point of where we are now (or as close to present as we have) rather than trying to go back in time to a whole different set of circumstances?
 - 2. The actors in these sectors did not know in 1990 or 2005 that they would be measured against their sectoral emissions in those years. Vermont did not even set GHG reduction goals until 2007, and requirements were not set until 2020.
 - 3. If we use 1990 or even 2005 data as the reference point, very odd things can result in the data (I can share a spreadsheet that maps out implications), given how much sectors and emissions have shifted over the last 15 and 30 years. For instance, one interpretation of using those reference years would be that our electricity sector could increase its emissions far above its recent levels between now and 2025. Note: the electricity sector will not have any trouble achieving its "relative contribution" emissions reduction requirements even if we use 2018 as the reference year, even if all that we assume is compliance with the existing Renewable Energy Standard (RES).

2:40 PM Break

2:50 PM GHG Inventory and Associated Recommendations
Subcommittee co-chair, task lead and Councilor Jared Duval and
Subcommittee member and task lead, Ryan Patch

Jared Duval and Ryan Patch presented. Council agreed to move forward with the [entire recommendation](#) as drafted and submitted in the meeting materials, while incorporating the notes from today's meeting, specifically:

- Let's sure we're clear about the timing of this additional work.
 - For the December 1st plan, the Council will use the May inventory. Recommendations are for next iterations going forward which won't be ready for the Initial CAP on December 1st.

- In the CAP, it will be noted the concern from the Council about this issue and ongoing research which is intended to address these concerns
- The additional technical work around Agriculture accounting is probably ready for an RFP. It should be reviewed with the Ag and Ecosystem Subcommittee

Additional notes from the conversation included:

- What constitutes other land uses in your study?
 - Combination of agriculture uses. Includes forest land, crop land, wet land, sediments, and other land such as biomass burning. Any land use that has human impact.
- There is new research around how solar can be used on farmland as dual use, with the data showing increased carbon sequestration value.

3:45 PM Climate Action Plan Components for Review
Jane Lazorchak, GWSA Project Director

Jane Lazorchak presented on [the process](#) for reviewing and approving content in the Initial Climate Action Plan, as well as the sections shared with the Council. The council offered the following comments on the four sections as well as the review process overall. Questions and comments from the Council included:

Questions and Comments on the process:

- How should we provide comments and have an orderly process?
 - Jane Lazorchak: A SharePoint site is coming soon as a way of organizing documents. The documents will be made available through MS Word so Councilors can make suggestions in track change. There is a naming protocol in place for the document.
 - Council members asked for a draft date on top of the documents
- Will we review these sections again?
 - Jane Lazorchak: The intent of this process is to review the sections now and address red flags, so there will be fewer concerns on November 23rd when the Council reviews a full final draft.
- Is there a standard for writing style - ie lack of buzzwords, understandable to all, etc?
 - Jane Lazorchak: The CAP Drafting Guidance has instructions on ensuring acronyms are written out and describes the writing of the pathway overview sections as needing to be at a basic level/understandable to anyone reading the Plan.
 - There was a reminder to write in plain language
- How will conflicting comments be handled?
 - Jane Lazorchak: They will be brought up at Council meetings to discuss and resolve.
- How will Councilors and drafters keep track of the comments that come in?

- Jane Lazorchak: A table has been developed to keep track of comments and how they are addressed. The goal is to produce revised drafts within a week.
- Some councilors asked to see revised versions of the documents in track change.

Comments on the sections under review

- Overview
 - Why are we having in this section pathways listed out for Rural Resilience, but not the others?
 - Jane Lazorchak: The sub-committee created goals associated with these pathways. We may need to revisit this once the pathways are complete. Goals are explicitly tied to pathways, which makes it structurally awkward. Council suggested some clarity around this for the future.
- Prioritization
 - What about foundational policies that might rank low today, but are key for the future?
 - Jane Lazorchak: This is addressed in the latest version of the text. Look for “enabling actions” in the impact definitions. Two new sentences.
- Foundational Criteria and Equity
 - Can we either put equity first or combine equity into the prioritization section? Or, add equity into the prioritization section, perhaps with the remainder of the equity section standing alone as a prominent part of the early part of the plan.

4:30 PM Public Comment

The following members of the public spoke:

- Kimberly Hornung- Marcy
- George Gross
- Sandy Henneberger
- Chris Mai
- Ben Walsh

4:45 PM Next Steps and adjourn
Secretary Susanne Young

- Next meeting is focused on public engagement

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