

Vermont Climate Council December 18, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: December 18, 2023 10:30 AM

Location: Virtual

Members Present:

Vermont Climate Council Members:

Allie Webster
Bram Kleppner
David Deen
Jaiel Pulskamp
Jared Duval
Johanna Miller
Sec. Julie Moore
June Tierney
Kelly Klein
Sec. Kristin Clouser
Dr. Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux
Lily Terry
Sec. Linsey Kurrle
Liz Miller
Michelle Boomhower (in place of Sec. Joe Flynn)
Paula Melton
Peter Sterling
Richard Cowart
Ryan Patch (in place of Sec. Anson Tebbets)

Staff and Support:

Jane Lazorchak
David Plumb
Marian Wolz
Cameron Hager

10:30 AM Convene/Welcome/Overview and Approval of Agenda and Approval of [Minutes](#)
Kristin Clouser, Agency of Administration & David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute

- Agenda and Minutes Approved by Council

10:35 AM Welcome New Councilors
David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute

- The following councilors were introduced:
 - Allie Webster, Energy Planner at NVDA
 - Jaiel Pulskamp, Organic Vegetable Grower in Worcester, Farm and Forest Rep

10:40 AM [Revised Biomass Recommendations- Review and Decision-Part 1](#)
Councilor Writing Group and David Plumb, CBI

- Bram Kleppner presented the updated biomass recommendation document on behalf of the writing group with the edits made since the Council's previous meeting.

11:00 AM Public Comment

- The following members of the public made comment:
 - Richard Hopkins
 - Nick Persampieri
 - Ashley Adams
 - Zack Porter
 - Peter Duval
 - Annette Smith
 - Cheryl Joy Lipton
- Key points of the comments made included:
 - Concerns around Greenhouse Gas emissions
 - If the Council will be emphasizing non-GHG factors in its decision on biomass, it will need to find other areas to reduce GHG emissions.
 - Concerns about the high emissions from burning biomass, noting that wood emits more carbon dioxide than natural gas according to EPA's factors.
 - Affordability and reliability issues with the McNeil facility and expressing doubts about the affordability of biomass
 - Several commenters cited concerns about the environmental impact, emissions, and sustainability of forests, and called on the Council to reject these recommendations in favor of more aggressive action against biomass

- facilities
- Request for a health study
 - Request for better public process around the rewriting of this document
 - Several commenters emphasize the need for a scientific approach, highlighting the importance of greenhouse gas accounting protocols and rules before making meaningful decisions.

11:30 AM Biomass Recommendations- Discussion and decision
David Plumb, CBI

- Council members reflected on public comment and discussed potential revisions to the document. After more than two hours of discussion, which included a break, the Council agreed to approve the document with the following changes:
 - **The following changes were made to the costs and benefits sections:**
 - **Changed Benefits #4:** May potentially have opportunities to reduce GHG emissions through the capture of waste heat.
 - **Removed Benefits #5** and put sentence in context section.
 - **Recommendations #2 was changed to:** The Council recommends that the Public Utilities Commission be directed to evaluate the role of biomass based on the results of the study described above. If the PUC is reviewing possible electric-led biomass facilities while the study is being conducted, it should review and address the issues described above in this document.
 - **For Recommendation #1,** the Council voted to **not adopt** new language suggested by a Councilor that would have asked the Public Utilities Commission to do this analysis.
 - The Council **agreed to add language** in the document noting that these recommendations will require funding, that this is high priority for the Council, and the Council **encourages the legislature and administration to find potential sources.**
 - Regarding the Recommendation #1 study on impacts to forest health, **the Council agreed to add the following details:**
 - Need to use an ecosystem, systems-based approach to forest health and resilience, such as protecting soil health, erosion and resilience to flooding.
 - Regarding the final paragraph noting the Life Cycle Analysis study, **the Council decided to remove that paragraph,** as it was not a recommendation.

1:50 PM Public Comment

- Annette Smith and Nick Persampiere added additional public comments.

2:00 PM Adjourn

- Next Meeting will be on January 8th, 2024.
- All agenda items not covered in the initial agenda are pushed into January. The Steering Committee will meet to determine the meeting agenda(s) for January and the possibility of an additional meeting.

DRAFT