

Vermont Climate Council September 28, 2021 Minutes

Date/Time:	September 28, 2021, 1:30 PM
Location:	Zoom Meeting; meeting was recorded and 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 present:	Abbie Corse, Anson Tebbetts, Bram Kleppner, Catherine Dimitruk, Chad Farrell, Chris Company, Erica Bornemann, Iris Hsiang, Jared Duval, Johanna Miller, Joe Flynn, Julie Moore, June Tierney, Kelly Klein, Lauren Oates, Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux, Lindsay Kurrle, Liz Miller, Richard Cowart, Sean Brown, Sue Minter, Susanne Young
Sub-committee co-chairs present:	Billy Coster, Peter Walke, TJ Poor, Sarah Phillips
Staff and support present:	Jane Lazorchak, Marian Wolz, David Plumb, Cameron Hager, 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 [Sept. 14, 2021 minutes](#)
David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute

Minutes were approved by the council.

1:40 PM Just Transitions Reflection

This reflection was an opportunity to receive Council feedback on ideas for future Just Transition reflections. Councilors had the following reactions:

- Support for having Senator Kesha Ram Hinsdale speak about Environmental Justice legislation, and Karla Raimundi-Devarie speak about the Agency of Natural Resources initiatives around Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.
- A suggestion to look at gaps the council has with data tracking and mapping just

transition principles.

- A suggestion for a conversation about the inequity of the status quo outside of Vermont, looking at the global impacts of climate change with places around the world.

1:55 PM Decision-making by the Council

David Plumb reviewed the [Protocol for Making Decisions](#). Key takeaways from the council's discussion on it included:

- Several councilors expressed gratitude for the clarity of the document and the intent behind it.
- Several councilors expressed concerns about the clause that says: *If the Councilors concerns stem from lack of details in the proposal, Councilors may ask for an item to be tabled for future iterations of the Climate Action Plan....*
 - How will this work in practice?
 - Fears that it could slow us down
- Councilors expressed concerns about the timeline to Dec 1 and our ability to make decisions in that timeline. They included:
 - The GWSA statute speaks of majority voting, and we may be too hesitant in using it.
 - If someone is highly passionate about disagreeing with the consensus, then that person should write a dissent on that issue.
- A concern was raised about the voting status on sub-committees of councilor designees.

Next steps: The Council will see how the approach is working in practice and confirm the approach in a subsequent meeting. Also, the Steering Committee will meet on September 29th, prior to the next Climate Council meeting and will review potential changes.

2:05 PM [Ag & Ecosystem Draft Pathways, Strategies and Actions](#) Subcommittee co-chairs

Co-Chairs Abbie Corse and Billy Coster [presented the subcommittee's emerging package of pathways, strategies and actions](#). The subcommittee is aiming for a final version of the matrix next week. Stressed that these documents are still being revised and the entire council will review the refined package of recommendations from the subcommittee next month. The councilors offered feedback and had questions for the sub-committee, in particular:

- **Gratitude for all the work that went into developing this comprehensive set of ideas.**
- **Specific Carbon Credit Proposal:** It was recommended to further explore markets outside of the state as well as any inside that have not been researched. The subcommittee co-chairs mentioned that they are wrestling with questions of accountability as well as weighing pros and cons. There is interest in compensating landowners for their carbon.
- **Current Use Value:** What specific changes are being considered?
 - Sub-committee co-chair response: Looking at how to include other management practices, particularly ones that store more carbon and promote old growth.

- **Biomass Electricity:** Has the subcommittee highlighted this issue, specifically advanced wood heat?
 - Sub-committee co-chair response: There is general support for advanced wood heat and other thermal applications. Some members of the committee are concerned about large scale biomass as there are public health and equity impacts that they want to examine.
- **Climate Resilience Zones:** What is meant by these zones?
 - Subcommittee co-chair response: This was born from a conversation around cross-cutting themes. The primary intention is to look across data sets.
- **Pathway F and Promoting Sourcing of Ethical Materials:** Tracking down these supply chains would be difficult. It would be a mistake for the subcommittee to support bans or strict language on key technologies for climate mitigation.
 - Subcommittee co-chair response: The subcommittee recognizes that everything will have some impact. The subcommittee wants to proceed with transparency with whatever they are putting forward. The impacts need to be clear for everyone, particularly for indigenous communities in and outside of Vermont.
- **Pathway B:** Would like to see more explicit focus on policies to avert development away from natural and working lands, and towards compact development.

3:00 PM BREAK

**3:10 PM [Rural Resilience Draft Pathways, Strategies and Actions](#)
*Subcommittee co-chairs***

Co-Chairs Erica Bornemann and Catherine Dimitruk [presented the subcommittee’s emerging package of pathways, strategies and actions](#). Stressed that these documents are still being revised and the entire council will review the refined package of recommendations from the subcommittee next month. The councilors offered feedback and had questions for the subcommittee, in particular:

- **Gratitude for all the work that went into developing this comprehensive set of ideas**
- **Feedback for Pathway 1**
 - Happy to see the remote meeting item
 - Suggestion to develop a cohesive strategy to get the word out on things like “Hurricane Awareness” week. Emphasize the need for preparedness
 - Has the group considered unifying jurisdictions to promote consistency?
 - Subcommittee co-chair response: This has not come up.
- **Feedback for Pathway 2**
 - Appreciate recognition of the critical need for resilient broadband and communications infrastructure
- **Feedback for Pathway 3**
 - Recommendation to consider multiple approaches to achieve an outcome. For instance, with the need to update electrical systems. Grants might be a good

approach for some, but other approaches might be needed as well. Also, let's link the outcome to a package of actions for our other goals – such as heat pumps etc.

- **Feedback for Pathway 4**

- Incorporate resilience in the scoring of existing programs.
- Happy to see the focus on increasing infrastructure. Communities need grants, not financing. Need an all-in approach. Need to quit relying on federal dollars and rely more on state dollars to make compact settlement happen. This should make the conversation easier on compact settlement.
- Building codes are crucial to resiliency.
- Good to see an action on creating an office of strategic coordination. Ag and Ecosystem subcommittee is also looking at this and looks forward to working on this together.

- **Feedback for Pathway 5**

- Feels practical and useful
- Have schools come up for this?
 - Subcommittee co-chair response: No specifics, but no reason not to consider putting them in.
- There are good cross-connections to what the building task group is doing. In particular, the building code for rental units is a big item.
- There is a tension between historic development patterns and hazard mitigation. Requires careful planning, place by place
 - Subcommittee co-chair response: Yes, we currently talk about how new development can be considered properly; possible strategic abandonment; and community by community vulnerability assessments
- Would like to see more visibility on a public health strategy. Let's pull these out so they are not buried. Issues beyond water (heat, disease etc.).

3:55 PM Definitions for Cost Effectiveness and Feasibility
Subcommittee co-chair TJ Poor

Subcommittee co-chair TJ Poor [presented recommended refinements to definitions of feasibility and cost-effectiveness](#), which are two of the five foundational criteria for analyzing draft actions and strategies. Key takeaways from the council were:

- The Council agreed to accept the definition for technical feasibility, explicitly limiting the definition to technical viability.
- The Council asked to revisit the Cost-Effectiveness definition, especially once the prioritization guidance comes out with additional details.
- Questions or concerns around Cost-Effectiveness included:
 - Rural Resilience and Ag & Ecosystems would appreciate more guidance on applying the basic definition.
 - A request for more guidance on assessing externalities.
 - A concern that we may need to look at the distribution of costs, linked to our Just Transitions principles
 - Subcommittee co-chair response: The subcommittee discussed this and believed those concerns would be picked in the Just Transition

analysis.

4:35 PM Updates on public/stakeholder meetings and equity consultation
Jane Lazorchak, Director of the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA)

Public meetings have been happening across the state and they've been well attended

4:35 PM Public comment

Members of the public made comments in the chat and verbally. Representatives of 350.org in Vermont also delivered thousands of signed postcards, and dozens of members of the public showed their support during the comment period for the ideas expressed by 350.org. The following people spoke:

- Marisa Keller
- Catherine Bock
- George Gross
- Scott Zens

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4:55 PM Next Steps and adjourn

- The next Steering Committee meeting at 8am on September 29)
- The Council will meet on Oct. 5 and Oct. 12.

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