

Just Transitions Subcommittee of the Vermont Climate Council

September 7, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Meeting in-person at VT Agency of Agriculture Williston Office
94 Harvest Lane, Williston VT

Many members attended hybrid due to weather. Another in-person meeting will be scheduled soon.

Attendance:

In person – Paula Melton, Claire McIlvennie, Abbey Willard, Beverly Little Thunder, Jane Lazorchak,

Alex Lintner and Karla Raimundi (guests – VT Agency of Natural Resources Environmental Justice Unit)

On Teams – Kelly Klein, Carey Hengstenberg, Virginie Diambou, Danielle Bombardier, Mona Tolba, Anna Guentner, Jenna Hirschman

Indra Acharya (facilitation guest – CAO consultant from CBI & previous JTSC member)

- 4:30 PM Welcome & Celebration of in-person gathering
- Minutes from 5/18/23 meeting approved
 - Welcome Paula Melton (new Climate Council and JTSC member)
 - Kashka Orlow and Indra Acharya have left the committee but are continuing to work in consulting capacity with the VCC for community engagement.
 - Sarah Phillips, Sue Minter and Sebbi Wu stepped down for various reasons.

- 4:45 PM Presentation and Discussion with Environmental Justice Office *Alex Lintner, Agency of Natural Resources EJ Unit*
- Alex presented slides
 - The Just Transitions subcommittee and the new state EJ Law have similarities.
 - The EJ law establishes the Environmental Justice Advisory Council and Environmental Justice Interagency Committee
 - There are 10 covered state agencies under the law. JTSC Members Abbey Willard (Agency and Agriculture, Food and Markets and Claire McIlvennie (Public Service Department) are on the Interagency Committee.
 - Reviewed timeline and process, first deliverable is the development of [core principles for community engagement](#). Followed by spending reports to understand how environmental benefits are currently allocated to communities. In the future development of mapping tool, and rule-making taking into account cumulative impacts.
 - Links to information on the Environmental Justice law, advisory council and interagency committee are included in the presentation.
 - There is currently a survey out for gathering feedback on the Core principles.
 - Claire acknowledged her experience and learning with JTSC has helped with creating the core principles.

- Jane noted that both the Climate Action Office and the Environmental Justice Unit work closely both out of the ANR Secretary's Office.
- Discussion of how these groups can work together in the future to have a larger impact on policy.

Question: how this is being circulated?

Answer: Follow along on the website: <https://anr.vermont.gov/about-us/civil-rights-and-environmental-justice/vermont-ej-law/calendar>

September 25th is the next Environmental Justice Advisory Council meeting and interagency committee meeting. Council and Committee will approve final draft and share for final comment.

5:10 PM

Discussion of JTSC Core Functions (*Facilitated by Indra Acharya*)

Goal of conversation: Can we take a step back and look from a distance to see if we understand how someone is using the principles and metrics?

How are we measuring of determining if agencies or the climate council are using the guiding principles correctly?

Paula: What are the expectations? Are other subcommittees reporting to us. Is it too late to weigh in after a recommendations are made?

Jane: Biomass task group had two members of the JTSC on the task group. She thinks this is a good approach.

What do we need:

- More resources and ways of approaching the communities.
- We need clear guidance when the principles apply, who completes the assessment, and at which point in the process. Also need to understand what is the role of the JTSC if principles are not utilized.
- Need more information about how proposal will affect jobs and industry and jobs
- Resources for ensuring accessibility among multicultural communities, particularly in communities where English is not the primary language.
- Did you consult with frontline communities? Who did you consult and what did they say?
- What did your committee do to center equity and justice as part of your process?
- Need to have more input earlier in the process.
- What do subcommittees need to bring to us and when before a recommendation is adopted?

5:58 PM

Stopped discussion for public comment, no members of public present.

More comments on discussion around Guiding Principles:

- Jane thinks the timing is good for training on the Guiding Principles.

- Indra recommends that we go back and look at the document to see which questions we can use and talk about how to evaluate answers.
- Danielle questioned what power the JTSC has if the guiding principles were not followed. Jane responded, this is an interesting question and we don't know what would happen if the JTSC disagrees with a subcommittee but it's a discussion that should happen. JTSC could ask the climate council for clarification or a policy statement.

6:15 PM

Updates:

- More Public Engagement updates from at the next meeting. However, public engagement is underway! Consultants are showing up places to talk about the climate action plan, tabling, focus groups, and more!
- Climate Action Office – New staff member starting Community Engagement and Communications Coordinator beginning at the end of September. Will be a bridge and provide staff support to the JTSC.
- Have not received a response from VT Renews BIPOC Council letter. Kelly will reach back out.
- New JTSC Members, we will be getting new members. Need to create a transparent process for accepting new subcouncil members. In addition, Legislature will need to appoint new members to the council because terms are expiring (7 out of 8). Co-Chairs can make recommendations on councilors through the climate council.
- Claire Dept of Public Service is conducting an equity assessment and can share the process they are using. The public engagement plan is still happening and Claire would like to check-in with JTSC to get feedback on how they are doing and share learning with each other.

Next Meeting: September 21st (4-6PM), October 19th (4-6PM)

6:30

Adjourned