

**Agriculture and Ecosystems Subcommittee  
of the Vermont Climate Council  
December 11, 2024 Meeting – Minutes**

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Location: The meeting was recorded and posted online [here](#).  
Subcommittee Members Present: Billy Coster, Jaiel Pulskamp, Ryan Patch, Jake Claro, Judy Dow, Stephen Leslie, Abbey Willard, Earl Hatley, Andrew Milliken, Alissa White  
State Agency Staff Present: David Plumb (CBI), Liz Amler, Judson Peck, Marli Rupe  
Minutes by: Evan Horne

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**Agenda**

12:00 p.m. Welcome, Approve Agenda, Approve Minutes, Updates

*David Plumb, Billy Coster, and Jaiel Pulskamp*

- David Plumb provided an overview of the agenda for the subcommittee meeting and the plan for the day.

12:05 p.m. Task Group 1 – Reduce GHG Emissions and Sequester Carbon

*All, led by Task Group 1*

- Ryan Patch provided a high-level overview of Task Group 1's priority actions.
- David Plumb mentioned that their fifth priority could be dropped, considering this is mentioned in Task Group 2's work.
- Ryan Patch agreed and said he's fine with dropping that priority if the second priority moves through, referencing PES.
- Andrew Milliken noted that there's overlap for education and assistance with Task Groups 2 and 3.
- Ryan Patch shared that their priority referencing education and assistance is similar, but it's very specific to the existing service delivery model and it's important to call that out.
- Judy Dow mentioned that Task Group 3 is also addressing caretakers in addition to farmers and foresters and asked if we can broaden language and have a common language.
- Ryan Patch noted that farmers and loggers are the specific folks working on this, and this action was intentionally written this way.
- David Plumb suggested keeping these actions separate rather than combining them to keep that specific language.
- Jaiel Pulskamp shared information on the language around NRCDs for context, supporting landowners who also implement forestry practices.
- David Plumb suggested holding on to this thought about combining education and technical assistance priorities and asked for the groups to reconsider when task group 3 presents.

12:15 p.m. Priorities for Task Group 2 – Support Adaptation, Viability, Recovery, Economies and Workforce  
*All, led by Task Group 2*

- Jake Claro provided a high-level overview of Task Group 2's priority actions.
  - Task Group 2 included TEK into actions and other actions were oriented around cultivating more partnerships.
  - Task Group 2 asked for more information on including forestry.
- Jaiel Pulskamp asked if the working land enterprise grant could be folded back into the language. Jaiel also asked about the language for action 21.
  - Jake Claro clarified that it's still there, just phrased differently. The Word doc shared also has a different language than their Excel.
- Judy Dow mentioned that TEK can be included in all actions. Judy also mentioned that Task Groups 1 and 2 focus too much on forestry and agriculture.
- David Plumb mentioned that Task Group 3 carries those other spaces for natural lands and caretakers,
- Ryan Patch clarified that farmers and foresters are specifically called out, and it's entirely appropriate to prioritize them in these task groups. These sectors are facing economic struggles, but they have a lot of opportunities to contribute to climate resilience.
- David Plumb suggested that perhaps there is some balance to include other landowners.

12:25 p.m. Priorities for Task Group 3 – Support Climate-Resilient Land Use Practices  
*All, led by Task Group 3*

- Andrew Milliken provided a high-level overview of Task Group 3's priority actions.
- Ryan Patch asked that biomass be removed from renewable energy siting, which should be its recommendation. Renewable energy siting is a significant policy that should not be conflated with biomass.
- Andrew Milliken said they would remove that line but wanted to ensure it's a priority elsewhere.
- David Plumb provided recommendations on how the subcommittee could move forward, signaling biomass as another priority action.

12:35 p.m. Biomass

- David Plumb summarized the Climate Council's previous actions on biomass and shared some recommendations to move forward.
- Jaiel Pulskamp asked for the cost of the proposed study.
  - David Plumb said he wasn't sure of the cost.
- Jake Claro asked for clarification on whether putting a stop to biomass would include all sources, such as thermal.
- Judy Dow provided context on the biomass task group.
- David Plumb asked for clarification on what Task Group 3 is proposing, whether this is utility-scale energy or something else.
- Judy Dow asked for more monitoring information.

- Billy Coster shared his thoughts on biomass from a just transitions standpoint. There are many Vermonters who depend on wood fuel for their livelihood. Billy strongly opposes any near-term change from existing facilities.
- David Plumb proposed three options in the chat to the group and asked group members to select one that most represents their view:
  - 1 - State agencies shall eliminate the use of biomass as a utility-scale energy source and stop referring to it as renewable energy.
  - 2 - Fund and undertake the study as soon as possible. And in the meantime, have a moratorium on approvals of any new biomass energy facilities.
  - 3 - Fund and undertake the study as soon as possible. And draw attention to the final two paragraphs of the Biomass Addendum.
- Judy Dow asked for a transition period to be included in these options.
- Earl Hatley asked if the goal of the state is to reduce emissions or protect the jobs of foresters,
- Ryan Patch shared information on the IPCC's life-cycle analysis of biomass and wants to acknowledge certain Vermonters and economies in this state are struggling.
- David Plumb proposed moving forward that a large number of members on the subcommittee present felt represented by #2.
- Billy Coster shared that he's okay as long as its noted there are folks on both sides of #2.

12:50 p.m. Public Comment

- No public comment.

12:55 p.m. Next Steps

- David Plumb asked if the subcommittee is comfortable with the co-chairs working together to work on the education and technical assistance actions to combine and make them more coherent.
- David also asked for the final version of work from three task group leads and noted this group is on track to submit priority actions to the Council.
- Billy Coster asked for final versions from task group leads, noted that he and Jaiel will try to make technical assistance actions consistent across groups, and shared there will be another subcommittee meeting next week.

1:00 p.m. Adjourn