

To: Vermont Climate Council
From: Jane Lazorchak, Director
Date: September 6, 2022
Re: Administrative Capacity for the Council

The Global Warming Solutions Act (“GWSA”) mandates that “the Council shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Agency of Natural Resources and the Department of Public Service and may request the assistance of any Executive Branch Agency and Department.” This memorandum addresses the scope and form of administrative and technical assistance provided to the Council.

This memo is timely for several reasons. First, the level of staff commitment from the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) over the last twenty months was necessary to support the development of the initial Climate Action Plan (CAP) but with the Council in a new period of work, needs are changing, and this level of support is not sustainable.

The GWSA does not provide for dedicated Council staff, but ANR provided staff in the spirit of working collaboratively to meet the aggressive timeline to develop and adopt the initial CAP. In addition, it is important to appreciate that the work of the Council has been supported broadly across state government, with staff from numerous Agencies supporting Subcommittees and more. The development of the Climate Action Office (the “Office”), however, requires staff capacity to be redirected to Plan implementation, as well as state agencies’ ongoing role in meeting the requirements of the GWSA. This is not to say that state staff will no longer available to the Council, but rather that it is timely to reconsider roles, responsibilities and capacity, and the need to advance implementation, rather than focus on administrative support and processes exclusively. As the Council considers budget priorities this Fall, understanding the administrative and technical capacity of the Office is necessary to inform those decisions.

Support to the Council from the Office can be broken into three categories: 1) Administrative support to comply with open meeting law and focused administrative support; 2) CAP implementation through coordination with Council, Subcommittees, and task groups; and 3) measuring progress. The Office will continue to support the Council and its Subcommittee’s compliance with open meeting law by warning all meetings and posting associated documents and videos. In practice, this will mean that ANR can no longer drive agenda planning and administrative coordination across the Council’s work. This will need to be led by Council and Co-Chairs. However, facilitation services are envisioned to carry on at the Council level and ANR will further support processes to make communication, agenda planning, and minutes easier to facilitate through shared templates, list





serves, and guidance in the coming months. For now, we have updated a memo prepared as a [logistical guide](#) for Subcommittees early in the process. Targeted administrative support will also continue to onboard new Councilors and Subcommittee members. An [onboarding guide](#) will be maintained and ANR staff will support setting up the partner email accounts and per diems, including guidance to do so.

As the Climate Action Office is established, there will no longer be a GWSA Director and Coordinator position. The Office will coordinate and provide significant expertise and capacity on state-led climate initiatives, as well as the monitoring, assessment and tracking of climate adaptation, mitigation measures, resilience activities, and emissions levels necessary to evaluate progress over time in achieving the requirements of the GWSA through implementation of the Plan. To carry out this work, the Office will work closely with staff across ANR, other state Agencies, the state climatologist, and key stakeholders such as the Climate Council. This coordination will be critical from the onset to ensure the programmatic functions of the Office are additive and supportive of existing climate action work. ANR acknowledges the importance of the public's role, specifically those of frontline and impacted communities, in enabling and shaping climate action. As such, the Office commits to fostering partnerships in pursuit of effective delivery of climate solutions for all Vermonters.

To the second point above regarding ongoing administrative support, the Office is working to build capacity that will focus on climate solutions across all areas of climate action. This includes staff capacity to support mitigation, adaptation, resilience, natural and working lands, and community engagement. We envision these staff being touchpoints with subcommittees and task groups which align with their work. We expect that in many cases these staff will be able to support the priorities that are elevated in these discussions, but they will also articulate the priorities that ANR is moving forward that complement the work of the Council, its Subcommittees and task groups.

Finally, a core component of the Climate Action Office will be to measure and track Vermont's progress in meeting the requirements of the GWSA. ANR will continue to produce the greenhouse gas emissions inventory for Vermont and will also develop a tool for evaluating and tracking progress on key strategies and activities intended to drive emissions reductions in line with the GWSA, as well as other key metrics for resilience, adaptation, and equity. The tracking of key mitigation strategies and activities will require the engagement of a broad suite of stakeholders and will require ongoing coordination and engagement with the Council as it is anticipated to inform future iterations of the CAP.

Across the three areas of ongoing administrative and programmatic support described above, ANR is currently managing numerous contractual services. The following tables illustrate the current and anticipated contracted services, along with their anticipated end date. Capacity of the Climate Action Office is finite and weighing future priorities with the existing work will be critical to ensure the timely completion of the highest priority work. The Office will work in collaborative fashion with the Council and other state Agencies in





the coming months to refine these processes and articulate the priorities for the coming fiscal year.

Existing Contractual Services	General Description	Anticipated End Date
Cadmus	Completion of Mitigation Abatement Curve	9/30/2022
Consensus Building Institute	Facilitation Services	9/30/2022

Anticipated Contractual Services	RFP Drafted	Posted	Closed	Anticipated Start Date	Anticipated End Date
Measuring and Assessing Progress	Yes	No	No	November	2024
Buildings/Thermal Emissions Study	Yes	No	No	October	Spring 2023
Agricultural Emissions	Yes	No	No	October	Spring 2023
Facilitation and Public Engagement Services	Yes	No	No	October	Ongoing
Life-Cycle Analysis	Yes	Yes	Yes	September	Spring 2023
Municipal Vulnerability Index	Yes	Yes	Yes	September	Spring 2023

