

## Climate Action Input Session: Municipal Stakeholders

Tuesday, November 19, 6:00-7:30pm

### Summary of Input

*Hosted by the Rural Resilience and Adaptation, Agriculture and Ecosystems, and Cross Sector Mitigation Subcommittees of the Vermont Climate Council*

#### Overview

The Vermont Climate Council is updating the state's Climate Action Plan. Subcommittees of the Council are holding a series of virtual public meetings to get input on their initial ideas for the update.

This document summarizes input during a session on November 19, 2024, focused on supporting the climate resilience of municipalities, with a focus on hearing from employees, officials, and volunteers of Vermont municipalities. 34 people attended the 90-minute Zoom meeting. A participant list is included below.

This document is not a transcript of the session, but rather an overview of themes and ideas that participants provided verbally, in the chat, or subsequently over email to Vermont's Climate Action Office.

The session began with a presentation on the Climate Action Plan updating process and recommendations from the Council's Rural Resilience and Adaptation, Cross Sector Mitigation, Agriculture & Ecosystems Subcommittees.

- View presentation [slides](#).
- View the input session [recording](#).

#### Summary of input

##### High-level summary

- Increased support for municipalities and Regional Planning Commissions
- Municipalities need clear, specific guidance on climate measures. Many want to make progress but don't know how.

##### Detailed summary

Below is a more detailed summary of input provided verbally during the conversation and in the chat grouped by subcommittees' focal areas.

### **Agriculture & Ecosystems**

- Want programs that support local agriculture and consumption. Closed air system for product storage. Portable meat processing, bring the butchering to the animals. Subsidize agricultural production, crop insurance, or animal insurance.
- We should be using mass timber for construction, it stores carbon and prevents concrete usage. Source local wood rather than transporting from Canada. Example of demonstration project at Fairbanks Museum of non-concrete building material.
- Continue and increase simple, effective projects like tree planting.

### **Rural Resilience & Adaptation**

- The structure of planning commissions leads to problems, chairs can constantly give waivers to businesses and undermining bylaws
- Expanding water and sewers systems is crucial, but economically challenging. More state support is needed.
- Municipalities need a way to understand the real costs and benefits of increased growth, perhaps a formula of some sort
- Balancing need for housing with preserving agricultural land, continuing to allow small scale agriculture even in dense areas
- Finding ways to continue compact settlement in village centers while growing "up and out" of flood prone areas.
- Regional Planning Commissions have limited bandwidth, and they are key to increased action.

### **Cross-Sector Mitigation**

- Concerns about heavy reliance on Hydro Quebec, the effects of increased demand from electrification and big cities.
- Need a more cohesive energy code so builders and architects are on the same page.
- Municipalities need the ability to influence transportation infrastructure decisions to be more efficient and resilient.
- Reliance on Zoning Administrators to check code compliance is not effective.

- Mandates are more effective than incentives with bandwidth-limited organizations and municipalities.
- Stormwater systems could be required to be closed systems, deep filtration, or graywater system for recycling the water into buildings
- All new builds should be required to use efficient, renewable technologies. South Burlington has this model, shared their approach and resources.
- Some of the latest grant programs, like Municipal Energy Resilience Program and Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants, have been incredibly chaotic. What needs to change?
- Prescriptive town policy language (“shall, must”) rather than aspirations policy language (“encourage, support”) gives municipalities more solid footing in Act 240 and Section 248.
- Concerns about short-term rentals reducing housing stability and accessibility.
- (Green) hydrogen for trucking and municipal buses, more investigation into this and potential state support.

## **Participants**

Lorraine Zaloom, Liz Amler, Scott McCormick, Chris Company, Mick McConnell, Ken Signorello, Dee Gish, Melissa Bailey, Jane Lazorchak, Otis Ellms-Munroe, Larry Carabeau, Meghan Rodier, Billy Coster, Eric Webb, Lauri Scharf, Alice Peal, Bob Galvin, Susan Parker, Ben McCall, Kevin Gish, Sam Lash, Brad Salzmann, Dana Clawson, Virginia Clarke, Amanda Sardonis, Jules O’Guin, Andrea Wright, Marlena Valenta (facilitator), Geena Baber (facilitator)