

Municipal Day

11/1/24

Overview

Jane Lazorchak presented on municipal level actions that Cross-Sector Mitigation and Rural Resilience and Adaptation subcommittees were working on developing and/or revising. She paused for comments and questions from participants after each slide and posed questions to the group at the end of the presentation.

Cross Sector Mitigation – Buildings and thermal sector

- We have had residential & commercial building standards for years but it's not enforced, what would it take to get it enforced?
- The struggle with enforcing those standards is it takes a lot of training.
- Public awareness: it doesn't cost a lot more and savings are huge.
- A lot of towns don't even have facility managers, can we just get to a baseline of staff understanding their towns' building inventory and how those buildings operate? We need professionals understanding how buildings operate, building science, and getting to that baseline.
- Is education a better solution than regulation?

Cross Sector Mitigation – Transportation and electric sectors

- No comments

Rural Resilience and Adaptation

- Concerns about funding and community support. Matches can help. There must be more funding for public outreach and education to happen.
- Are there any thoughts on how to lower emissions from wastewater? There are a lot of emissions that come out of our wastewater.

- You can get a drier and then you can use it as fertilizer, town of Milton was looking into this.
- Flares can lower emissions, but what do we do specifically for waste in wastewater?
- Manufactured homes – you could install heat pump or do weatherization for some. The energy standards for homes are pretty weak; South Burlington put forward for all future homes to be net zero. Clean Heat Standard: no one can afford to pay that.
- Education is huge, friends are surprised by how well my electric saw and lawnmower work. People don't think of electric tools as powerful.
- Would like to see something happen for mobile homes [energy efficiency and weatherization efforts]
- There are rebates for electric lawnmowers through Green Mountain Power. Recommend emailing your Green Mountain Power representative for rebate.
- Mow electric is an organization to check out.

Questions and answers

Jane asked: what do municipalities need to further address climate action at the town level?

- Plan integration
 - There are hazard mitigation and FEMA plans
 - To come up with a fourth plan, a climate plan, would be hard
 - It would expand on existing plans, such as hazard mitigation
- Don't reinvent the wheel. Having a list of actions/menu that towns could choose from would be very helpful. CCRPC (Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission) helped a lot with the energy element of our plan in response to Act 174 – we got a laundry list of actionable outcomes that were measurable. Something like that would be helpful.
- Create template actions for municipalities.
- Everything starts with the audit. As far as funding, maybe it can work through VECAN (Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network) where each town has “x” dollars for volunteers to do it and training.

- Hartford has a climate action plan and one staff member is largely focused on implementing. This includes working on putting heat pumps at the fire station. Concern over multiple energy sources and registering for multiple energy systems. (Still have two oil sources but even with heat pumps you can't use the same systems. Don't want two different registrants.)

Jane asked: was anyone impacted by flooding?

- Huntington and Moretown
- Moretown has quite a few buyouts, Huntington has 11 buyouts
- Think more long-term with the revitalization programs and develop out of hazard area

Climate Action Input Session: Municipal Stakeholders

Tuesday, November 19, 11:00-12:30pm

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. Around 80 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

- Relying primarily on volunteers for such a massive, important transition is not sufficient
- Insufficient and inconsistent data creates difficulties for municipalities in goal setting and tracking

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

- There should be a strategy to reduce or eliminate tree cutting for biomass energy generation
- Food security and local food systems are becoming increasingly important as the climate changes.
- Supporting our farmers as things get more unpredictable and crops face issues like floods and droughts will be crucial to keep agriculture afloat.
- Current Use (Use Value Appraisal) program requires 10-year date on wood harvesting, could be an interesting data source for consideration.
- When it comes to the most responsible ways to manage land and sequester carbon, volunteers have to do their own research and figure it out. State guidance on these things would be really helpful so we have an easier way to take steps.

Rural Resilience & Adaptation

- For existing buildings, we need the state to give municipalities the power to regulate heating and efficiency.
- The reliance on volunteers leads to unequitable ability of municipalities to undertake important projects.
- Legislative boards can be dismissive of recommendations or work from volunteer groups.

Cross-Sector Mitigation

- There needs to be consistent funding and support to Regional Planning Commissions to do work regarding data. The statewide data doesn't disaggregate well to the municipal level.
- The state should provide a standard way for municipalities to measure their climate impact. There are many methodologies, and it leads to results that are hard to compare.
- We need to recognize how unsustainable our lifestyles in the northern hemisphere are, how do we convey that to our communities?

- All new builds should be required to use renewable energy for heating and hot water. Its being done in South Burlington and Burlington. Adding new fossil fuel infrastructure that will take decades to phase out is unsustainable.
- While initial costs are nominally higher on homes with renewable energy, they are significantly less expensive to operate. It is a matter of equity, as everyone should have access to a healthy home. Burlington and South Burlington also require new buildings be solar PV (photovoltaic) and EV (electric vehicle) ready.
- Ensuring new housing is efficient and has access to public transit is key to affordability.
- Residential Building Energy Standards/Commercial Building Energy Standards need increased enforcement at the state level so there is consistency across communities.
- Considering mass timber for construction instead of concrete and steel could reduce the construction sector emissions and be viable in our heavily wooded state.
- Education on the dire nature of the situation is important. Consumer habits, like large vehicles and overconsumption, are a huge barrier.
- Getting data from fossil fuel companies to understand how much is being used would be really helpful.
- There is valuable data available, like in the [Transportation Sustainability Tracking Tool](#), but it needs to be regularly updated and maintained. It should be expanded to be statewide.

Participants

Scott McCormick, Sophi Veltrop, Ann Janda, Henry Amistadi, Liz Amler, Susan Yost, Ann Kuendig, Martha Harrison, Brandon Garbacik, Jane Kartsch, Kazmira Nedean, Cathyann LaRose, Laurie Smith, Doug Bergstrom, Joanne O'Connor, Joyce Manxhester, Jeremy Roy, Maggie O'Brien, Catherine Crawley, Jennifer Durgin, Jeremy Roy, Katharyn Hassan, Sophia Donforth, Mike Morin, Andrew Chalnack, Paula Iken, John Reid, Edward Barber, Anand Fedele, Mary Ormrod, Marian Wolz, Nathan Fowle, Megan Litwhiler, Ann Lundquist, Lynne Fitzhugh, Christopher Yuen, Krista Karlson, Morgan Wilbur, Thomas Leitz, Chris Campany, Ann Lawless, Heidi Britch-Valenta, Andrew Shapiro, Andrew McKeever, Tara Parks, Allie Webster, Deirdre Holmes, Stephen Dotson, Gig Zboray, Dustin Bowman, Keith Osborne, Bob Atchison, Sharon Harkay, Karen Horn, Billy Coster, Alice Peal, Neva Cote, Jaiel Pulskamp, Marlena Valenta (facilitator), Ann Janda (facilitator), Callie Fishburn (facilitator)

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 Salzmman, Dana Clawson, Virginia Clarke, Amanda Sardonis, Jules O’Guin, Andrea Wright, Marlena Valenta (facilitator), Geena Baber (facilitator)