Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittee of the Vermont Climate Council

December 13th, 2024 Minutes

Location:	Meeting was recorded and posted online here.
Subcommittee Members present:	Andrea Wright, Alice Peal, Marian Wolz, Ann Lawless, Mike Burke, Val Stori, Eric Forand, Scott McCormick, Chris Campany
State Agency Staff Present:	Anne Margolis, Ben Rose, Jared Ulmer, Caroline Paske for Stephanie Smith, Otis Ellms-Munroe
Minutes by:	Sue Plant

1:06 PM **Welcome/Agenda Overview/Approval of December 6, 2024 Minutes**
Minutes approved

1:10 PM **Cross Cutting Pathways Review** - Subcommittee reps on Cross-Cutting task groups provided a briefing of what is being proposed for Council review.
Education - Alice Peal briefed the group on the task group's steps taken to include climate change in the public school curriculum that is grad-level appropriate and what types of education and programs could exist for after school. They also discussed public information distribution and communications to create awareness.
Compact Settlement – Bronwyn Cooke explained regulatory barriers and the modification of the actions to align with Act 181. The top actions are to monitor and implement act 181, invest in water infrastructure, and transportation planning.

1:27 PM **Table(s) of Recommended Actions** - Subcommittee members review and prepare any comments or questions you may have.

Scott McCormick pointed out the actions all feed into the pathway and prioritizing one aspect of it tends to take away from a whole suite of interventions or actions. He recommends that all the actions need to be put together. Andrea clarified that the council would see all of the actions.

Bronwyn mentioned using the existing MVI to create infrastructure focus to serve a new audience. Ann Lawless felt it didn't reflect the consensus at the last meeting of making it easier for state agencies to aggregate the information. Maybe it should read, "enhance for further uses".

Scott mentioned implementation modalities considering most towns do not have the resources, and 14C is a way to start implementing this but needs further discussion about what role municipalities can play in weatherization and/or other climate actions. Chris brought up the lack of energy data. Alice asked, under pathway 16, we're recommending it goes to cross section mitigation, what would be audits of water and wastewater? Chris emphasized that towns are very limited in their capacity to do these steps.

Andrea pointed out that there are no actions under pathway 17 (change Vermont's land use policies). Some were moved under pathways 14 and 15.

Alice noted the difference between subsidized housing and affordable housing.

2:13 PM	**Council Priority Actions Presentation Review and Key Messages** – Provided an overview of the slides and talking pints that would be presented to the Council. Discussed more what should be conveyed to the Council and how. Task Group Priority Actions were reviewed and edited for consensus.
2:45 PM	**Public Comment** None
2:50 PM	**Next Steps** Rural Resilience will present on Monday. Andrea will be in touch to deliver any messages from the Council meeting and beyond.
2:51 PM	**Adjourn**

CHAT:

Chris Campany
Only 1 of our 27 towns has a planner on staff.

Ben Rose
For further details on what Alice was mentioning (full implementation of the FEMA Flood Risk Management Standard) including 2 feet above Base Flood Elevation level for new construction in Special Flood Hazard Areas: https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_floodplain-management_ffrms-policy_092024.pdf

Anne Margolis
Can we say instead: "Expand upon Municipal Vulnerability Indicators Tool to build a Municipal Vulnerability Index so that...."

Bronwyn Cooke
"using the MVI as a base create fuding/infrastructure specific indices that can be used …." something like that

Anne Margolis
...."so that it can be used as an index for various infrastructure sectors to assist in prioritization of infrastructure investments."

Val Stori
…for use by state agencies (and others) to identify specific locations with specific vulnerabilities…

Anne Margolis
or "specific combinations of vulnerabilities"

Andrea Wright

Existing: Improve Municipal Vulnerability Indicators Tool to be an index in addition to being an indicators tool so that it can be used to prioritize infrastructure investments across the state based on relative vulnerability. Ensure it includes currently missing data such as historic utility outage data, to the extent available, and ANR's Environmental Justice mapping tool, when complete.

Chris Campany
The only thing I'd caution is that however it is to be used for allocating resources/prioritization that it be rigorously tested prior to launch/use to make sure it accesses the communities intended to be served.
At both the federal and state levels there's a tendency to so narrowly define qualifying parameters that the programs ostensibly become non-functional in terms of addressing need and getting money to where it need to be.

Bronwyn Cooke
and to be transparent about how the index was arrived at (variables, weights applied etc)/what it's intent is/that the index may not be appropriate to use for other purposes.

Chris Campany
Excellent podcast for public admin geeks on failure of program DELIVERY and sense that government is broken. Disregard the party discussions. It's the program delivery discussion that's excellent.
https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/22/opinion/ezra-klein-podcast-jennifer-pahlka-steven-teles.html

Marian Wolz
also perhaps we don't use the word "improve" as creating an index will ultimately serve a different purpose. The MVI currently was build with municipalities and municipal and regional planning in mind, whereas an index would serve a different purpose and would then need to be a different tool. I agree an Index could be built off the factors identified in the current MVI, but don't want to lose the existing tool's intended audience in that process.

Alice Peal
https://www.planning.org/nationalcenters/hazards/planninginformationexchange/
EXPLORATORY SCENARIOS FOR HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING

Chris Campany
Not for now, but a future action could/should be post-disaster review of what, if anything, could have been done to mitigate the harms AND what recovery actions were successful and what were not. This former would likely take place in the months after a disaster. The latter would likely take place in phases beginning months and then a couple of years post-disaster. We need both to inform resilience and adaptation.

Otis Ellms-Munroe
Vermont Energy Committees - VECAN

Chris Campany
Does VECAN capture which energy committees are actually town-related and how many are more mission/action driven standalone groups.

Bronwyn Cooke
VECAN says there are over 100... how active, not sure...

Val Stori
IBE TG had it but no longer have any actions under it

Chris Campany
What I find with many of ours is that they're primarily focused on building efficiency but have little understanding of the connections between land use and energy consumption. We're working on improving connections between planning commissions and energy committees but the bandwidths of both are very limited.
Kati Gallagher, VNRC (she/her) joined as a guest

Marian Wolz
Here is the link to the spreadsheet from September that includes a list of which actions were assigned to which task group:
https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared%20Documents/Rural_Resilience_Subcommittee/Documents/Task_Group_Comparision_Updated091324.xlsx

Ben Rose
Would it be clearer to say "Change Vermont's land-use policies to ensure that new housing units are constructed only in flood-safe locations."?

Anne Margolis
I think most of the PW 17 actions were W/WW related so are now under PWs 15a and 15b and greatly consolidated (thanks to the work of Andrea in consultation with Neil Kamman of DEC). The 3 orphans, which I *think* ended up in Community (but hopefully or others Stephanie can confirm) are:
-"Establish a dedicated, comprehensive state level program with funding to strategically purchase or match funding for hazard-prone properties, easements to conserve river corridors, floodplains, forests, and wetlands to reduce overall flood risk and enhance flood storage statewide."
-"Expand the eligibility criteria and increase funding for VHCB's conservation and buyout program, to address any flood-vulnerable structures."
-"Fund ERAF for non-federal disasters in towns that have adopted floodplain and/or river corridor bylaws and to support the 25% non-federal match for buyouts and develop criteria for distribution when funding is limited."

Otis Ellms-Munroe
Those look familiar and I think all ended up under PW14 in revised form.

Marian Wolz
Yes, and the first and third orphan actions did fall to CCP and we move them up to Pathway 14 and revised them, the one that references VHCB was removed at the recommendation of VEM and in alignment with the SHMP.

Chris Campany
And a friendly amendment to Ben's suggestion, "and that the necessary infrastructure (water, sewer, etc.) investments are made to make such possible."

Anne Margolis

The state, through the Public Utility Commission and Public Service Department, should investigate resilience planning, including defining, valuing, measuring, and setting targets for grid resilience. Utilities should integrate resilience planning into their Integrated Resource Plans based on guidance resulting from this proceeding.

Anne Margolis

It is under a similar strategy: "Strategy 15a: Create a policy, planning and organizational foundation to support effective investments in infrastructure resilience by understanding exposure, identifying vulnerabilities and risks, investigating options for prioritized actions."

Marian Wolz

this feels very similar to the action as written on the slide

Anne Margolis

Agreed - I'm happy with the specific action if others are. Feel like I compromised a bit with broadening it!

Anne Margolis

Maybe we need additional actions to reflect doing this for the other sectors

Alice Peal

To review the full set of recommendations: EducationBaseTemplate.xlsx