

**Vermont Climate Council
March 13, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Date/Time: April 24, 2023 12:00 PM
Location: Virtual Meeting

Members Present:

Vermont Climate Council members:

- Abbie Corse (partial attendance)
- Bram Kleppner
- David Dean
- Erica Bornemann
- Jared Duval
- Sec. Julie Moore
- Kelly Klein
- Kristin Clouser (replaced by Sean Brown near end of meeting)
- Liz Miller
- Michele Boomhower (in place of Secretary Flynn)
- Miranda Gray (in place of Chris Winters)
- Paula Melton
- Richard Cowart
- Ryan Patch (in place of Anson Tebbetts)
- TJ Poor (in place of June Tierney)
- Sue Minter

Staff and support:

- Jane Lazorchak
- David Plumb
- Marian Wolz
- Cameron Hager

Minutes Prepared by: Cameron Hager and David Plumb

12:00 PM Convene/Welcome/Overview and Approval of Agenda
Kristin Clouser, Agency of Administration & David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute

Agenda was approved by the Council.

12:15 PM Review and Approval of [January 9, 2023](#) and [March 13, 2023 minutes](#)
David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute

Minutes for January and March were approved by the Council.

12:10 PM Just Transition Reflection- [Just Transitions Sub-Committee Memo](#)

Kelly Klein, Just Transition Subcommittee, gave a brief overview of the memo. The subcommittee is in a period of transition regarding their role and support of the Climate Council process. With that transition in mind, the subcommittee put together a series of recommendations and suggestions for the subcommittee's role going forward.

- Council members agreed to include the memo's ideas in the development of the Council's workplan.

12:20 PM [Biomass Task Group Recommendations](#)
David Plumb, CBI

David Plumb reviewed the process for the Council to review and make decisions around the Biomass Task Group recommendations:

1. Agreement on the process for discussing and making decisions around the recommendations.
2. Presentation by task group members and opportunity for clarifying questions.
3. Council discussion on the recommendations
4. Public comment
5. Two step voting with a Google sheet where the Council would vote on option 1 or option 2 followed by a vote on the overall package that includes one of the options.
6. Review of next steps depending on the outcome of the vote.

Councilors agreed to the process with the following two clarifications:

- Allow for time to react to public comment before voting.
- Potential amendments to the recommendations' existing language would only happen after the Council had a chance to vote on the package as written.

Liz Miller, Councilor and member of the Biomass Task Group, gave a brief overview on the recommendations from the Biomass Task Group as well as the process that got them to these recommendations including discussing their guest speaker presentations and multiple meetings

over the course of the past year. Judy Dow, another member of the Task Group, gave remarks as well. Council members discussed these recommendations. Key themes were:

- Support for the analysis and studies recommended by the Task Group, and appreciation for the work of the group.
- Concerns about adopting all the recommendations as written, in particular due to:
 - Questions about the impact on Vermont's electricity supply from the potential closure of the state's two biomass facilities. The questions related to impacts on the reliability and diversity of energy sources, the state's reliance on imported energy sources, the carbon profile of whatever energy would replace the plant's output, the social justice implications of importing energy that may have negative impacts on communities outside of Vermont, as well as questions about the impact on rural communities and rural economies in Vermont.
 - A desire to understand better the results of the health studies that have been done to gauge potential negative impacts from the state's biomass plants.
 - A concern about the Council making policy recommendations on specific power plants or initiatives.
- Support for using the life-cycle analysis to better understand the carbon emissions from biomass energy.

1:47 PM Break

1:57 PM Public Comment

Ten members of the public made comments, which included:

- Lack of representation and inclusion of BIPOC voices: Some commenters voiced that there have been repeated requests to put BIPOC community members in positions of power and there still is no action. The Council needs to address these issues directly.
- The time to act on biomass is now: Several commenters raised concerns that information around biomass is not well understood by the Council. There are multiple studies around the issues of biomass and how it is not beneficial to emissions goals, they said. The commenters would like to see Council members read more about these issues. They do not want to see the Council pause and punt on making actionable decisions on this issue, given its urgency.
- Importance of biomass energy for rural economies and forests: Conversely, some commenters said the discussion around biomass energy was undervaluing the good that these plants do for rural livelihoods and sustainable management of forests. These participants asked that policy makers focus on helping these plants get cleaner technology rather than shutting them down. These commenters also stressed concerns about losing a power source in the state.

The Council discussed these comments and engaged in conversation with some of the commenters.

2:40 PM Biomass Task Group Recommendations- Decision-Making
David Plumb, CBI

- A majority of Councilors present chose to abstain from selecting option 1 or option 2 in the biomass recommendations, causing neither option to move forward.
- The Council voted 12 -1 to not move forward with the recommendations as written.
- The Council agreed to have the Climate Action Office collect comments and concerns from Council members regarding these Biomass recommendations. The Climate Action Office, with CBI's help, will synthesize the input and present the summary to the Steering Committee, which will decide a next steps for the Council on the Biomass recommendations. The Steering Committee will not be tasked with developing a new draft, but rather a process for the Council to develop revised biomass actions that can address councilors concerns.

3:10 PM Next Steps
Jane Lazorchak and David Plumb

The council reviewed the next steps of the meeting which included:

- The Steering Committee will meet to discuss the Council's workplan in 2023-2024 (including dates for upcoming Council meetings), a new process roadmap document, and next steps on Biomass.

3:15 PM Adjourn

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