

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

Date/Time: March 13, 2023 9:30 AM
Location: Hybrid In-Person and Virtual Meeting
Physical Location to Attend in Person: AOT Conference Room, 2178 Airport Road, Unit A,
Berlin, VT 05641

Members Present:

Vermont Climate Council members:

- Abbie Corse
- Bram Kleppner
- Chris Winters
- David Dean
- Erica Bornemann
- Jared Duval
- Johanna Miller
- Julie Moore
- June Tierney and TJ Poor
- Kelly Klein
- Kristin Clouser
- Lauren Oates
- Leslie-Ann Dupigny-Giroux
- Lily Terry- Virtual
- Lindsay Kurrie
- Liz Miller
- Michele Boomhower (in place of Secretary Flynn)
- Paula Melton
- Richard Cowart- Virtual
- Ryan Patch
- Sue Minter

Staff and support:

- Jane Lazorchak
- Marian Wolz
- Megan O'Toole
- David Plumb
- Brian Woods
- Catherine Morris

Minutes Prepared by: Cameron Hager and Catherine Morris

9:30 AM Convene/Welcome/Overview and Approval of Agenda
Kristin Clouser, Agency of Administration & Catherine Morris, Consensus Building Institute

Agenda was approved by the Council.

9:35 AM Introduction of New Councilors

The following new Councilors were introduced:

- Paula Melton
- David Dean

Current Council members went around and introduced themselves.

9:45 AM Just Transition Reflection- Learning from the Jan 9, 2023 discussion and further reflection on the [VT Renews BIPOC Council September Letter](#)
Catherine Morris, Consensus Building Institute

Catherine Morris, Consensus Building Institute, suggested ground rules to govern the Council's work together, which were adapted from the Biomass Task Group. The Council shared reflections on the Vermont Renews BIPOC Council's letter to members of the Administration and legislature in September 2022, the input they received at the January 2023 Council meeting and more generally their consideration of the work of the Council and Subcommittees to integrate just transition and equity into their work over the past year. Key themes from the discussion are below:

- Public engagement and expectations: Participants acknowledged the need for clarity and improvements in the process, end products, and public engagement strategies to better meet expectations of the public, emphasizing the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives and addressing power dynamics.
- Diversity and representation: The discussion highlighted the struggles in achieving adequate diversity within the group, with participants expressing a desire to better represent and elevate voices of frontline and the most vulnerable communities.
- Capacity and workload: Concerns were raised about the capacity of working individuals, particularly front-line community members and those who will be responsible for implementation, to participate effectively in the Council's work, with suggestions to address the need for compensation and ways to balance other commitments in the face of the pace of the work.
- Continuous improvement and adaptation: Participants recognized the importance of ongoing efforts to improve how the Council implements Just Transition principles and emphasized the importance of continuing to learn from experience, evolving, and fostering trust in the process.

10:15 Opening Discussion- [Review the core focus of the meeting](#)
Catherine Morris, Consensus Building Institute

Catherine Morris gave an overview of the core components of a successful strategy (capacity, tasks, roles, and governance) and asked the Council to suggest other elements they would like to discuss. . Each component had key questions to think about and hypothesis to test as the Council develops their strategy in the meeting.

- Participants raised the importance of “unpacking” the initial plan, making it accessible, and communicating it to the public, including those who will be responsible for implementing it.
- Others emphasized the need to be clear with the public about the scope of the Council’s work over the next two years, what the Council cannot do, where there are gaps in the current plan, and what is currently being done to implement the plan recommendations.

10:30 AM Sketching out the next 1-2 years: What are the elements of a successful process and how does that translate to [Tasks, Roles, Capacity, & Process](#)
Catherine Morris, Consensus Building Institute

The Council members took time to individually and then collectively share aspects of the core components that they want to consider for a successful strategy over the next two years. Key points included:

- Capacity
 - Members acknowledged the challenge of balancing the work of implementing the current plan, while continuing to evaluate our progress and do the work needed (research, public engagement, deliberation) for the next iteration of the plan at the same time.
 - To expand capacity, members suggested tapping other (non-state) resources particularly other networks already doing some of this work.
 - Be clear on expectations of staff recognizing the focus of the Climate Action Office on implementation.
 - Council members need to reduce their time commitment overall; the past level of effort is not sustainable.
- Roles
 - Many characterized the Council as an advisory entity; others suggested that some recommendations of the Council are binding on the administration. Clarification is needed.
 - There is a need to focus on multiple goals of GWSA – GHG reductions, resilience, equity, public well-being simultaneously.
 - Subcommittees should focus on plan not programs.
 - Council should address cross-cutting issues.
 - Council should apply systems thinking to its work.
 - The Council must become trusted brokers.
 - Flip the hub (Council) and spoke (outside organizations) model of the Council.
- Tasks
 - Develop draft workplan upfront
 - Prioritize tasks based on budget and time

- Look at IPCC and GWSA for criteria to prioritize
 - Monitor progress on implementation and actual results; evaluate effectiveness of current plan implementation
 - Unpack the plan for decisionmakers and the public so it is understandable and implementable
 - Identify the decisionmakers and those responsible for implementation
 - Communicate what is already underway to implement the plan
 - Listen and learn through public engagement; build trust
 - Amplify the importance of adaptation and resilience
 - Focus on the most vulnerable and most impacted and keep equity front and center
- Process and Governance
 - Members agreed that the process roadmap needs updating and clarification on many aspects of the process. Some suggested that Steering Committee should take the lead.
 - Need clarification around the process for adopting addendums versus making plan revisions.
 - Need to reconsider decision-making process, e.g. should the Council strive for consensus versus voting, should decisions be made on the whole plan or on discrete parts, and what should be the role of minority reports.
 - Need to inform the legislature of changes in scope and resources needed to do the work.
 - Describe how public comments will be incorporated into addendums and revisions.

12:05 PM Refining the Strategy and Timeline
Catherine Morris, Consensus Building Institute

Councilors met in four small groups to work on a strategy and timeline. A number of priorities and milestones emerged across all groups:

- Biomass Task Group report and addendum taken up by the Council.
- Begin implementation of robust public engagement strategy.
- Revisit all aspects of Process Roadmap; clarify roles of SC, climate office, subcommittees, etc.)
- Prioritize Council's work over the next two years using quantitative and qualitative criteria.
- Update data as needed (Science & Data Subcommittee)
- Continue to report to legislature.
- Develop new policy recommendations and revise the plan.

1:15 PM Public Engagement in 2023 and Beyond
David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute

David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute, gave a presentation on the Public Engagement plan for the Vermont Climate Council. In the presentation, David discussed the objectives of the

public engagement plan, the initial approach, and the elements of success.

Key points of discussion were:

- Start with issues communities care about to build relationships and trust.
- Be clear about what we ask of the public. What do we want input on? Implementation? Further revisions?
- How do other efforts on public engagement complement this effort? Avoid duplication.
- Involve the Council directly in public engagement. Shouldn't be a conversation just between consultants and the public.
 - Share schedule of public engagement meetings so the Council can attend as available.
- Acknowledge comments received /heard and how the Council is carrying what it hears forward.
- Manage expectations of public around the Council's role and authority.
- Recommend analysis of comments by geography/demographics/other (consider deliberative polling)

1:55 PM Public Comment

Five members of the public made comments, which included:

- Lack of representation and inclusion of BIPOC voices: Participants expressed concern about the insufficient inclusion of BIPOC community members in decision-making processes and conversations, highlighting missed opportunities for engagement with on-going BIPOC-led climate.
- Process and transparency issues: Concerns were raised about the lack of transparency in decision-making processes, as well as issues surrounding communication and public engagement. Participants questioned the endorsement of certain policies without proper consultation or input from the public and relevant stakeholders.
- Impact of communication and outreach: The importance of in-person meetings and accessible communication channels was emphasized, with participants suggesting improvements to the public comment portal and increased responsiveness to public comments.
- There was a call for greater public engagement and consideration of broader environmental concerns.
- There were questions about the Council's role on reviewing and taking positions on specific legislation e.g., Affordable Heat Act.
- There was a questions about if and how public engagement that was conducted around the recommendation of a clean heat standard.
- In addition, there were questions about how the climate action plan and the agreements of the Council are represented before the legislature, especially when there are different views among councilors.

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

commenters.

2:50 PM Final Reflections and Next Steps

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

- The next meeting will be held in April to deliberate on Biomass recommendations, to review a workplan based on today's conversation, and proposed revisions to the Process roadmap.

3:00 PM Adjourn

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