

Vermont Climate Council
May 19, 2025, Meeting Minutes
11am-2pm

Join Zoom Meeting

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Meeting ID: 853 5623 8931

Passcode: 183131

This is a Zoom meeting. If members of the public wish to join in person, the location is: ANR - Camels Hump Room N111

Councilors present:

- Jared Duval
- Rich Cowart
- David Mears
- Chris Company
- Dahlia Cohn
- Dr. Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux
- Jaiel Pulskamp
- Johanna Miller
- Secretary Julie Moore
- Kelly Klein
- Liz Miller
- Matt Cota
- Michele Boomhower
- Ryan Patch
- Secretary Sarah Clark
- Shayla Livingston
- Will Eberle
- Stephanie Moffett Hynds
- Brian Dunkiel

Meeting objectives:

- Review suggested revisions to the Draft Priority Actions, and informally test Council alignment on revisions.

Agenda:

10:55 AM Climate Council Members Gather

11:00 AM Convene/Welcome/Overview
Secretary Sarah Clark and David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute

Will Eberle, newly appointed Councilor and Director of Weatherization at Capstone Community Action introduced himself. The Council approved the minutes from May 5th with the following revision:

- Add Shayla Livingston to the attendance list

11:05 AM Review Written Public Input Since the Past Meeting
Sophi Veltrop, Climate Action Office

Dahlia highlighted the May 6 youth session [summary](#), which combined input from seven Zoom participants and seven written submissions. Feedback focused primarily on education and workforce development, with additional comments on power generation, farm resilience, refrigerants, transportation, and the cap-and-invest program. Sophi Veltrop presented an overview of the [written comments](#) received:

- Comments related to natural and working lands address the following topics:
 - How nature-based solutions should be defined/evaluated
 - Freshwater issues (distinct from their forest roundtable input)
 - Support for the 9% forest preservation bill
- Support for investment in universal EV adapters/chargers and consult California agencies on cap-and-invest policies, as they update their system.
- A detailed comment analyzing the cap-and-invest proposal, referencing the Treasurer's report and technical study.
- Several electric utilities submitted joint feedback on electric sector recommendations. Additional comments came from Renewable Energy Vermont on siting/permitting and from the public.
- One comment responds to a public input session, with specific feedback on the priority actions.
- Comments about resilience, specifically covering resilience hubs and flood resilience, as well as how to distribute funding between mitigation vs. resilience.
- Several comments address whether biofuels should count as renewable.
- One comment supports rail systems in Vermont.

11:10 AM Education, Workforce, Finance – Reviewing Suggested Revisions
Rural
David Plumb, CBI

Councilors suggested the following revisions:

- #5: What does sustainable business development mean? Let's not throw around a term unless we're clear on the meaning. Probably remove "sustainable," or define more clearly.

- #6: We should explicitly say what the leading indicators are.
- #2: Is there a need to create a new curriculum or make the existing curriculum open source and accessible?
 - Somewhere in the middle - David Plumb and Dr. Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux will adjust the wording accordingly.
- Ensure that identifying the necessary resources to carry out this work is included in the preamble above.
- #4: Define climate careers (i.e. define resilience careers and add conservation careers).

11:35 AM Resilience and Adaptation (plus Compact Development) –
 Reviewing Suggested Revisions
David Plumb, CBI

Councilors addressed the following revisions:

- #4: Let's make this broader. Add a line about connecting the various organizations out there doing this work.
- #10: Add the word hardening - "to harden, improve, expand, or build new..."
- #12: CAO to confirm that this most recent language is coherent with the Resilience Implementation Strategy (RIS).
 - Change to "a plan in the context/ reflective of fiscal constraints"
- #6: Surprised at the use of the word "whether."
 - Specific to the PUC preceding. Add "PUC investigation underway."
- Where can we add mention of supporting implementation of the climate superfund law?
 - Need to highlight somewhere – likely in the preamble or in Cross-Cutting issues. Secretary Moore asked to be part of drafting this language.

12:10 AM Agriculture & Ecosystems – Reviewing Suggested Revisions
David Plumb, CBI

Prior to discussing Ag & Eco, the Council discussed adding an overarching recommendation:

- Include a recommendation asking the legislature to identify a source of interim funding.
 - Build on the example of water quality and energy efficiency funding.
 - Start now, and it can be incremental.
 - Can be a new or existing source of revenue (avoid impacts on Vermonters facing financing hardship) (David Mears., Rich Cowart, and Sec. Julie Moore offered to come up with criteria).
 - Could sunset it, or link to other revenue coming in (e.g. cap-and-invest).

- Vermont needs to look at what a more self-reliant future looks like given the funding landscape.
- This would fund emissions reductions and resilience strategies
 - Pick a handful of low-hanging fruit that everyone agrees are needed
 - Don't forget to include agency/institutional capacity to implement

Councilors agreed on the following Ag & Eco revisions:

- #5: Figure out what fund we're talking about.
- #8: David Plumb will clean up the language.
- #9: Suggestion to not include the final sentence about disincentives.
 - Final bullet – farmers shouldn't be prohibited from installing renewable energy on their land. Also, these activities are not necessarily mutually exclusive.
 - We can point to agrovoltatics, but it's not being widely implemented today. Without either an incentive or a disincentive, the current approach is not likely to change.
 - Ag soils have been the focus of 90+% of recent proceedings. They do need attention.
 - Drop the word "new" for buildings, and add the word "renewable."

12:45 PM Break

12:55 PM Public Comment

Annette Smith and Ina Smith offered public comment:

- This report is a recommendation to the legislature. For renewable siting, both incentives and disincentives are needed. Provide more financial incentives (higher rates) for sites we want, disincentives (lower rates) for sites we don't want. This isn't about opposing solar – it's about giving the legislature meaningful guidance on better siting. We're past the point of supporting solar everywhere, regardless of location. State agencies have raised concerns about threats to forests and prime agricultural soils. Without addressing disincentives, the recommendation loses impact. Check out the Mass Audubon and Harvard [report](#) on solar siting.
- Are mountaintops suitable for wind development, given the rains and flooding over the past 5 to 10 years? It's clear that they are not. What is the Council's position on this issue?

1:10 PM Cross-Sector Mitigation – Reviewing Suggested Revisions
David Plumb, CBI

Councilors discussed the following revisions:

- In the opening paragraph of cap-and invest: "Next steps" instead of "Necessary steps"

- ANR comfortable with changing language in first bullet back to “will”
- Add more urgency into “developing a framework” for reporting
 - Change the language to say this must be done expeditiously, ANR should describe the resources it needs to implement, and set a target date for having a reporting framework in place.
 - Be careful, if the Council says: develop an administrative rule, then ANR has 12 months, and limited opportunities for discussion of the program design.
 - ANR can spell out more clearly what it will produce by Dec 15.
- Not comfortable with paragraph at the end
 - Needs to align with the preamble text, and new funding strategy
 - Key message – get started now, and focus on the long-term.
- In study on affordability, speak to maximize benefits as well as costs.
- Change: “If a cap-and-invest initiative were not able to deliver sufficient reductions in the thermal sector” to something more like “Cap-and-invest would be the lead strategy, but not the only one (Rich Cowart to send some suggested text.)

1:55 PM

Next Steps

Jane Lazorchak, Climate Action Office and David Plumb, CBI

The following next steps were identified for the Council:

- The Council will meet in person on June 2nd. Stay tuned for the agenda and a proposed prioritization exercise.
- David Plumb will use today’s notes to follow up with Councilors to develop a new working draft of the priority actions document.
- An additional Council meeting was added on June 16th.

2:00 PM

Adjourn

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