

**Vermont Climate Council
March 10, 2025, Meeting Agenda
10am-3pm
In-Person Meeting with a Virtual Option**

Meeting Minutes

In-person Location:

Agency of Transportation Dill Building, 2178 Airport Road, Berlin, Vermont. Conference Room 135.

Meeting objectives:

- Build greater understanding and agreement around the content of the updated Climate Action Plan that will be shared as a draft for public comment.
- Build agreement around the “caveat” language that will accompany the draft priority actions and other text that will be released for comment
- Agree on how the Council will apply its decision-making protocol in March when releasing the draft plan.

Methodology:

The Council focused most of the meeting on the **priority actions** and asked the following questions of themselves:

- Do I understand these priority actions?
- Are they in good enough shape to go out as a draft to receive public comment?
- In addition to the overall caveat language that will accompany the draft document, do any of these priority actions need additional caveating language in the draft?

Councilors used physical handouts (oversized flashcards with each priority action) to assist in the conversations, as well as flipchart notes to help keep track of key points and/or emerging conclusions.

Prior to reviewing the priority actions, the Council discussed exactly what content will be shared as a draft, and the caveat language that will accompany it.

Climate Councilors present:

- Secretary Sarah Clark
- Ryan Patch (virtual)
- Dahlia Cohn (virtual)
- Eric Forand (virtual)
- Kerrick Johnson
- Secretary Julie Moore
- Chris Campany
- Jared Duval

- David Mears
- Kelly Klein
- Johanna Miller
- Richard Cowart
- Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux
- Michele Boomhower (for Secretary Joe Flynn)
- Liz Miller
- Jaiel Pulskamp
- Matt Cota

9:45 AM Climate Council Members Gather

10:00 AM Convene/Welcome/Overview
Secretary Sarah Clark and David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute

10:10 AM Approval of Agenda/[Approval of Minutes](#)
David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute

The Council approved the minutes from the 2/10 meeting, with a reminder to add them to the meeting page on the website.

10:15 AM Just Transitions Reflection / [Summary of Public Comments Received](#)
Sophi Veltrop, Climate Action Office

Sophi Veltrop reviewed recent public comments which highlighted support for removing biomass from the list of renewable energy sources, limits on combustion-based fuels, and solutions like thermal energy exchange networks. Other comments focused on forest management, protecting public lands, and promoting weatherization, community solar, and wind energy. Additional comments emphasized the Council's Just Transition principles, protecting frontline communities, and ensuring fossil fuel and biomass industry workers have pathways for job transitions. Councilors were encouraged to stay updated on incoming public comments by visiting the website's "Get Involved" page.

Councilors shared the following comments:

- The Just Transition Subcommittee plans to review recommendations with an equity lens during the April public comment phase. They will share insights and recommendations with the full Council and encourage discussion as the final draft is prepared.

10:20 AM Overview of April Public Engagement Meetings
Sophi Veltrop, Climate Action Office

Sophi Veltrop discussed April's public engagement events which will include seven in-person meetings across Vermont and two virtual meetings – one before and one after the in-person events. Councilors were asked to sign up to attend at least two events each. All materials, including the draft plan and priority actions,

will be available online, and digestible/accessible versions will also be created for the meetings. The meetings provide two key opportunities: facilitating interactive exercises for shared learning and discussing the Plan's content, including reactions, draft ideas, and personal experiences.

10:30 AM Preparing a Draft for Public Comment - Overview
David Plumb

- What content will be shared in April?
- What overall caveat should the document contain?
- Introductory Chapters

Councilors had the following reflections on preparing the draft Plan for public comment:

- Councilors agreed to share the priority actions and background chapters that are ready by the end of the month. Councilors emphasized the importance of sharing easily digestible contextual information during public engagement. The substantive chapters aren't ready to be shared as a Council draft and won't be emphasized during engagement, though the public can see versions on the website.
 - Councilors were encouraged to work with David Plumb and Sophi Veltrop, who will be developing the public meeting materials and designing the meeting. Councilors expressed an interest in reviewing materials.
 - Sophi and David noted the importance of achieving a balance of providing enough background to get meaningful, specific feedback, while keeping materials high-level and readable.
- Councilors asked for some demographic information to be collected from meeting participants.
- Councilors updated the caveat language for the draft document to: "This draft document contains priority actions under discussion for recommendations and directives by the Vermont Climate Council to the legislature and executive branch agencies. The Council continues to debate these potential actions and seeks public input prior to making decisions on them. These draft ideas do not yet reflect a final decision by councilors, who have a range of views on them."
- Councilors also suggested that the draft clearly indicate when rule-making may be triggered and include a plain-language definition of rule-making.

10:50 AM Priority Actions and Chapter Narratives – Part 1 Cross Cutting Issues

Councilors suggested the following changes/additions:

- Education:
 - Lift up K-12 Education as it is not adequately represented in the current priority actions. Dr. Lesley-Anne Dupigny-Giroux will assist with framing the chapter writing.

- What does the word “support” mean? In #3, change it to “grow state funding for...”
- When agriculture is mentioned, incorporate forestry.
- In #4, make the recommendation focused on a broader definition of technical assistance service for individual homeowners, and then mention navigators and energy coaches as a “such as.”
- Include a call-out box indicating what is meant by “climate career/ workforce” and note that a definition is in development.
- Throughout, incorporate the idea that the first step would be to identify / evaluate existing programs, then increase funding where needed.
- Compact Settlement:
 - Update #5 to: Increase investment in municipalities to improve, expand and build new drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, and other infrastructure to support compact development, especially growing away from climate hazards such as flooding, and ensure the assets’ long-term operation and maintenance.
 - #5 is similar to #10 in Rural Resilience and Adaptation and should be cross-referenced.
 - Consider how to incorporate “walkable, livable communities” as alternative language for “compact settlement.”
- Workforce Development:
 - See if there is more substance for #7, and if not, delete.
 - Elevate the need to support the transition of fossil fuel workers as a new action.
 - In #8 and #11, add specificity about the types of trades and careers.
 - #3, 8, 9 and 10 could potentially be combined.
 - All workforce recommendations should broaden the definition for climate jobs.
 - Consider diverse recruitment, including recently incarcerated or incarcerated populations.
- General comments/ questions:
 - Include a priority action on financing as a complementary strategy. Joey Miller will spearhead.
 - Some Councilors are interested in identifying top priorities within the existing priority actions.
 - In general, the Council should include priority actions even if they represent maintaining existing efforts, especially in light of the current federal and state funding landscape.
 - Add definitions to programs and fully write out all acronyms.

11:30 AM Priority Actions and Chapter Narratives – Part 2 Rural Resilience and Adaptation

Councilors shared the following reflections:

- In #14, use clarifying words for equipment, supplies, and services.

- For #15, start after the comma to make clear the intent: “Provide funded partners...”
- In #11, delete “and/or county government.”
- Merge #11 into #2 and combine #12 and #13 in an effort to avoid repetition.
- #8, 9, and 10 are all related to walkable, livable communities. Consider integrating proactive planning for electric and wastewater infrastructure into all three areas, ensuring smarter rebuilding after flood damage.
- Consider language modifications in #7-10 to pull together various threads.
- Start #8 at “Create a transportation flood resilience...”
- In #9, delete “normal replacement schedules” as it reflects the status quo.
- Keep #5 in Compact Settlement and delete #10 in Rural Resilience because they are similar.
- Tweak #5 in Rural Resilience to reflect the ongoing mapping efforts by the Vermont Geological Survey. Delete piece about regional housing targets, as those have already been set.
- Call out new action for statewide project plan for hazard mitigation (similar to the State Transportation Improvement Program). Andrea Wright and Chris Campany to lead on writing this new action.

12:15 PM LUNCH

12:30 PM Public Comment

Matthew LeFluer, Annette Smith, Mary Andrews, Cheryl Joy Lipton, Peter Duval, and Earl Hatley shared comments verbally or in the chat. Their comments included the following ideas and questions.

- Will events be held regionally or at the town level? Town-level events should be hybrid, as Vermont’s senior citizens make up a significant voting population. If held regionally, they should be countywide, depending on available technology. Ensuring full participation is essential so that the public can engage meaningfully in the process. Please send updates on and links related to upcoming public events as soon as possible.
- I have several suggestions for the public meetings. First, make it clear from the start that Vermont is already taking significant climate action – there’s a misconception that nothing is being done, and a quick overview could help set the record straight. Second, try to avoid meetings being dominated by repetitive talking points from organized groups; it can be frustrating and unproductive. Third, to make discussions more productive, focus on key, high-interest topics instead of broad, repetitive discussion. Since the plan covers many areas, selecting a few issues, like the modified clean heat standard, compact settlement concerns, or biomass, can encourage deeper engagement. Highlighting these topics will draw attention, generate discussion, and motivate people to read more and

provide substantive feedback. Finally, since the plan is already pretty far along, general feedback might not be that helpful, so asking for targeted input would likely be more valuable.

- I appreciate the Plan's focus on smart growth but feel that public transportation isn't adequately addressed. It's crucial not just for climate goals but also for equity and economic growth. While challenging in a rural state like Vermont, that's even more reason to prioritize it now. Vermont can't rely on electric vehicles alone, especially with an aging population and residents who are disabled or lack access to cars.
- I strongly agree with focusing on key aspects of the Plan in public meetings. Sending materials in advance, especially on controversial issues, is a great idea. Briefly cover the entire plan but prioritize discussions on major topics like biomass, liquid biofuels, transportation, settlement patterns, and flooding. With legislative changes to Act 250 and growth areas, our approach must better align with increasing flood risks.
- The Plan seems to be missing a section on what the legislature should have done to make this work possible. It's nearly impossible to take the status quo – economically, culturally, and technologically – and smoothly transition to a zero-emissions civilization, covering both operating and capital emissions (Scope 1, 2, and 3). Assuming an incremental, gradual shift is possible is like trying to climb a ladder to the moon – sometimes, you need a rocket. The future will be radically different from what we know today, and since the legislature shifted this responsibility to the Climate Council, the Council should push back and highlight the legislative barriers that have made the work more difficult. If real progress is the goal, the process needs to change.
- Please use Just Transition Subcommittee recommendations throughout the document. Approve recommendation to the Climate Council Addendum requesting study of biomass, with a moratorium on new facility permits during this time. Use language adopted by the Agriculture & Ecosystem Subcommittee, and not water down or rewrite it.

2:40 PM

Priority Actions and Chapter Narratives – Part 4 Agriculture and Ecosystems

Councilors identified the following changes:

- Combine #3 and #16 and explicitly reference Act 59.
- Use the consolidated version of #5, 6, 7, and 12 (the summary version is already written).
- Clarify distinction between Ag & Eco and Rural Resilience. For Ag & Eco recommendations, the focus is on land stewardship (and built infrastructure that directly supports that stewardship), whereas Rural Resilience is focused on public and other community infrastructure. To be sure, these areas overlap in some instances.
- Reminder to fix acronyms.
- #2 as it stands is not ready. Revise it to say “utilize best practices to account for carbon sequestration and emission reductions from agriculture,

forestry, and other land use,” without directly referencing the inventory for now.

- In #1 and #12, separate distinct concepts (e.g. separating out TEK) to make clear the intent/goal.
- Whenever an act is referenced, describe and hyperlink.
- Revise #13, change to say, “through considering how to incorporate into...” and remove “state regulatory processes.”
- Rework language to avoid dichotomies (e.g. “Western science versus traditional knowledge”). Recommendations should not undermine science, and TEK should be integrated into scientific decision-making.
- #17 raises concerns. A small group of Councilors should revise this action. It needs to reference cost-effectiveness and avoid making a distinction between renewable projects and other development. Consider adding a caveat that some Councilors oppose it.
 - Suggestion to weave it into a broader story about protection of land and economic viability.
 - Will need to revisit this on March 31.
- #4 needs more detail about the programs. Ryan will send around more data and presentations.
- In #14, acknowledge that the first half of this is already happening / note that it will continue to utilize nature-based solutions and weave the second half into broader technical assistance actions.
- In #11, remove the word “locally.”
- In #10 and in all priority actions, remove names of outside organizations (i.e. non-state government orgs).
- All Councilors will review the biomass addendum in preparation for further discussion and a decision at the March 31st meeting.

NOTE: The Council did not have time to review the Cross Sector Mitigation Subcommittee priority actions. A 2-hour meeting is scheduled for March 17th to build greater understanding around Cap-and-Invest programs, a cornerstone of the recommendations. A significant portion of the March 31st Council meeting will be dedicated to these priority actions.

2:55 PM Applying the Council’s Decision-Making Protocol for the Draft Plan
David Plumb

The Steering Committee will make a proposal regarding a decision-making protocol for the draft Plan, for the Council to adopt and use on March 31. The March 31st meeting will dedicate time to:

- Reviewing briefly the changes resulting from today’s conversation
- Dedicating time to Cross Sector Mitigation and the biomass recommendation.
- Agreeing to sharing the revised priority actions as a draft

3:10 PM Adjourn

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