

Vermont Climate Council
March 31, 2025, Meeting Minutes
11pm-2pm

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84581440267?pwd=f9b1Z6wnq84Ke0MpJiW30w8kgJLYv0.1>

Meeting ID: 845 8144 0267

Passcode: 814926

Climate Councilors present:

- Secretary Sarah Clark
- Jaiel Pulskamp
- Michele Boomhower
- Jared Duval
- Chris Company
- Secretary Julie Moore
- Liz Miller (partial attendance)
- Lesley Anne
- Rich Cowart
- Johanna Miller
- Kelly Klein
- Matt Cota
- Ryan Patch (partial attendance)
- Dahlia Cohn (partial attendance)
- Kerrick Johnson
- David Mears
- Peter Sterling
- Eric Forand

Meeting objectives:

- Agree on the draft content of the updated Climate Action Plan that will be released in early April
- Receive an update on technical modelling
- Confirm April Council meetings

Agenda:

- 10:55 AM Climate Council Members Gather
- 11:00 AM Convene/Welcome/Overview
Secretary Sarah Clark and David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute
- 11:05 PM Summary of Public Comments
Sophi Veltrop, Climate Action Office

Many comments urged the Council to align the Plan with Just Transition principles to support vulnerable communities and help fossil fuel and biomass workers shift to clean energy. Among commenters, there was strong support for phasing out biomass, halting new biomass electricity projects, and extending restrictions to all biofuels until the legislature approves the requested study. Commenters supported affordable, low-emission energy solutions, like weatherization, community solar and wind, and thermal energy networks, along with protections for low- and middle-income electricity ratepayers. Accessible, clean-energy public transit was emphasized as essential for equity. Commenters supported land management practices that improve crop and forest health, resilience, and storage, grounded in science, Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Indigenous perspectives. Sustaining carbon sinks and protecting biodiversity through public land conservation and old growth restoration. Other comments mentioned the importance of State action in the broader context of climate action politically.

11:10 AM Finalizing Draft Content – Cross Sector Mitigation Priority Recommendations
David Plumb, CBI

Councilors suggested the following changes to the draft priority actions:

- Spell out all acronyms (Buildings and Thermal has some still)
- On Cap & Invest:
 - Use the new combined recommendation that combines recommendation with new next steps language:
 - Through legislation and administrative action, join a cap-and-invest program, such as the New York Cap and Invest (NYCI) or Western Climate Initiative, covering emissions from Vermont’s transportation fuels sector, and potentially other sectors, once necessary preparatory steps are taken:
 - In preparation for joining, take necessary supporting steps including:
 - ANR will develop a framework for the reporting of greenhouse gas emissions data from fuel suppliers and other significant emitters of climate pollution and recommend to the Legislature statutory by December 15, 2025 changes needed to support streamlined reporting requirements and a stepped implementation plan.
 - ANR, in collaboration with the Public Service Department and the Vermont Agency of Transportation, and collaboration with the Vermont Climate Council, will advance a technical study to determine the most appropriate and feasible mechanism(s) for addressing affordability concerns related

to the implementation of a cap-and-invest program, including:

- Distributing dividends from allowance sales directly to LMI households in close to real-time;
 - Using proceeds from allowance sales reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to provide direct incentives to support increasing energy efficiency and the adoption of low-carbon technologies, particularly for low- and moderate-income households;
 - Setting limits on allowance prices (i.e., a price ceiling) to provide certainty about maximum costs.
- ANR and members of the Council will continue to monitor cap-and-invest programs in other jurisdictions, including New York, California, Quebec, and Washington. Updates will be provided at quarterly Council meetings.
- Lift it up above Transportation and Buildings.
 - On Transportation #2: Language is fairly vague. Can we be more specific?
 - Councilors suggested the following:
 - ii. Supporting vehicle electrification by ensuring long-term, consistent funding for EV incentives to low- and moderate-income car purchasers which aligns with estimates provided for the VT Agency of Transportation 2/1/2024 [Clean Transportation Incentive Programs Report](#); guidance from the 2/3/2025 [2025 Legislative Report Vermont's Clean Transportation Incentive Programs](#) and consideration of federal incentives availability, as well as transit and micro-transit vehicle electrification
 - iii. Supporting vehicle electrification investment for the equitable deployment of fast charging (Direct Current Fast Charging/DCFC) and Level 2 Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment (EVSE) charging stations to level needed to meet the modeling done in the Pathways 2.0 Report and as estimated in the Agency of Transportation 1/16/2025 [EVSE Network in Vermont with NEVI Plan](#) the 2025 EVSE Legislative Report.

- On Transportation #3: Is this really a priority because of the modest amount of emissions reductions?
 - Yes, and update to:
 - Use VTrans' July 2024 Vermont Smart Growth, VMT, and GHG Research Project Report and the November 2023 VT Agency of Transportation Carbon Reduction Strategy and associated GHG Sketch Tool to guide investments in public, active, and shared transportation, such as transit, micro transit, passenger rail, biking and walking. In order to:
 - Minimize the need for single occupancy vehicles, also known as reducing vehicle miles traveled which has important co-benefits such as cost savings to individuals and families, access to jobs, and health and environmental benefits.
 - Support Compact settlement patterns which enable public, active, and shared transportation.
- Electricity #6 lacks specificity
 - Rich, Liz, and Kerrick will add in the specificity on affordability and efficiency
- Buildings and Thermal #10 feels similar to sub bullet on #8
 - Leave separate for now, and revisit in May.
- Buildings and Thermal #8 - Weatherization
 - Delete the number and date.
 - Rich and Julie to add a line explaining the ambition and the reality (e.g. *here are the targets, this is what would have to happen to reach the target, etc.*).
- Buildings and Thermal #11 - Equipment Standard:
 - Explicitly ask the legislature to fund the study.
 - Delete the start date for the study.
- Add overarching language for the Ag & Eco priority actions that articulates the intent of the subcommittee, given that language about Traditional Ecological Knowledge was removed from #1.

1:00 PM Public Comment

Alice Peal, John Brabant, Cheryl Joy Lipton, and Annette Smith offered public comment that included:

- Public Health is missing its most important component around tracking, specifically to recognize the importance and promote the work public health does in tracking and alerting the state about threats (i.e. pandemics, ticks, vector- and water-borne diseases, air quality issues, etc.) as well as coming up with strategies to mitigate these threats.
- Federal funding to the Department of Public Health has been withdrawn, already impacting two key priorities: social services and mental health programs, and immunization programs in the state.

- The Council needs to seriously consider the reality of shrinking funding resources. The federal government has already pulled funding, and the impact is likely to be dramatic - potentially leading to major layoffs. We need to stay grounded in that reality as decisions are being made.
- Please stick to the agenda and the timing. It's unfortunate that Ryan Patch had to leave before the discussion of the Ag and Eco recommendations.
- Leave the recommendations as they are and let the public weigh in – then make changes based on that input.
- Make sure the following points are included in the plan: 1) Siting renewable energy projects on agricultural or forested land has negative impacts on climate and carbon sequestration/storage; 2) All greenhouse gases should be counted – not just non-biogenic ones. They all have the same effect in the atmosphere.
- Just a reminder that the Cross-Sector Mitigation (CSM) Subcommittee received several presentations on weatherization in February 2023. You can find them on this [page](#). If the specific meeting isn't listed directly, check the calendar for the CSM meeting on February 16, 2023. The Council and subcommittees have done a lot of work – let's be sure we're using the resources and data that already exist.
- On appliance standards, that recommendation was changed from adopting a standard to just suggesting a study. If other states are already doing this, why not learn from their experience instead of commissioning yet another study? How many different consultants or entities have already been hired for studies like this, and what has it all cost? Let's think about that before recommending more studies.
- The biomass study is a big reason the Council is still struggling to finalize recommendations. Clearly, there's a problem with a process that keeps bringing us down to the wire - once again. If a study is to be done, let's do it on biomass.

1:15 PM Break

1:25 PM Finalizing Draft Content – Reviewing Revisions Since March 10
David Plumb, CBI

Councilors agreed on the following next steps regarding the revisions since March 10:

- Ag and Eco:
 - On biomass (#15):
 - The third option will go out to the public with a link to the addendum: “Fund and undertake as soon as possible the study recommended by the Council, along with the guidance to the Vermont Public Utilities Commission (PUC) contained in the Council biomass addendum.”
 - Appointed members of the Council send funding priorities to the legislature (in the fall)

- On siting (#9):
 - Small group (David P., Liz, Ryan, Jaiel, Billy) to clean up the text below, and likely include both versions in the documents:
 - State agencies should utilize financial incentives, siting policies, and regulations to incentivize, support, and preferentially site solar and wind energy capacity on new buildings, parking lots (by installing solar roofs), in compact settlement areas (including renewable energy and charging facilities at rental housing) as well as in previously-disturbed/developed areas.
 - Use disincentives to avoid forest clearing, particularly xxxx (contiguous forest, ecologically sensitive etc.), holding renewables to similar standards as other development.
- Cross-Cutting Issues:
 - On Financing: Include the new recommendation
 - Remove reference to specific non-state organizations.
 - Refer to Vermont distribution and efficiency utilities

1:55 PM Finalizing Draft Content – Agreeing to Release Draft Content
David Plumb, CBI

Councilors agreed to make the revisions based on today’s discussion in order to release a draft of the priority actions with the accompanying caveat language this week.

2:00 PM Adjourn and Next Steps

- Jane will provide a written update to the Council on the technical modeling.
- There will be an additional Council meeting on April 14th, with a Land Acknowledgement update included.

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