

Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee of the Vermont Climate Council
March 18, 2021 Meeting – Minutes

Date/Time: Thursday March 18, 2021, 11:00 AM
Location: Meeting was recorded and [posted publicly](#)
Members Present: Jared Duval, Johanna Miller, Liz Miller, Lauren Oates, Richard Cowart, Peter Walke, Ed McNamara, David Farnsworth, Peter Bourne, Christine Donovan, Kelly Klein, Gina Campoli, and Adam Knudsen
Staff Present: Jane Lazorchak, Ken Jones, Dan Dutcher, Deirdra Ritzer, Dan Edson and Diane Bothfeld
Members Absent: None

- 11:00 AM Confirm Appointment of The New Liaison Members: Kelly Klein From Just Transitions Subcommittee and Lauren Oates From Agriculture & Ecosystems Subcommittee
- 11:05 AM Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes
- [March 4, 2021 Minutes](#)
 - [February 25, 2021 Minutes](#)
 - [February 17, 2021 Minutes](#)
 - No corrections offered. All Minutes approved.
- 11:07 AM Confirm the Subcommittee Charge - attached
- Peter Walke will distribute to Subcommittee members.
- 11:10 AM Review Top Policy Proposals from Each of the Task Leaders
- Buildings – David Farnsworth/Christine Donovan
 - Goal: to align policy and regulatory framework in order to drive and substantially increase public and private investment in building sector efficiency and energy use.
 - Transportation – Johanna Miller/Gina Campoli/David Farnsworth
 - Goals:
 - Fuel (switching)
 - Technology
 - Demand Reduction
 - Electric – Liz Miller, Ed McNamara
 - Goal: Develop a power policy
 - Non-Energy Sectors – Peter Walke
 - Agriculture
 - Waste (Wastewater and Solid Waste)
- 1:10 PM RFI – RFP Process and Progress Towards Getting Consultants on Board

- Jane Lazorchak reviewed the Technical Services RFP Development
- The goal is to review the received proposals and get the RFP(s) out by end of March.
- Proposed RFP would be reviewed by this committee on April 1 with recommendations ready to present to full Climate Council on April 2.

1:25 PM Timeline for the Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP), And How to Handle Our Parallel Paths

- Review of overlap between Climate Action Plan and CEP
- Acknowledgement of use of LEAP model being prepared by CEP for the Climate Action Plan and implications for RFP and timeline

1:40 PM Identification of State Staff to Provide Technical Assistance

- Review of assigned and ad hoc state staff.
- Jane Lazorchak will provide subcommittee members all contact information for state staff.

1:50 PM Public Comment

- Stuart Blood, Steve Crowley and George Cross spoke from the public and full comments may be viewed in the video recording of the meeting.

2:00 PM Adjourn

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Sub-Committee Descriptions and Major Milestones for Consideration

Rural Resilience and Adaptation Sub-committee

The Rural Resilience and Adaptation Sub-committee will focus on pressures climate change will place on Vermont's transportation, electricity, housing, emergency services and communications infrastructure, with particular attention to the challenges faced by rural communities across the state in addressing these pressures.

The Rural Resilience and Adaptation Sub-committee shall identify, evaluate and analyze existing and new strategies and programs that build resilience and prepare the State's communities, infrastructure, and economy to adapt to the current and anticipated effects of climate change. This work is anticipated to emphasize reducing Vermonters' energy burden and seeking opportunities for nature-based solutions within the built environment.

The Rural Resilience and Adaptation Sub-committee shall (by statute):

1. Develop a "municipal vulnerability index" to identify those communities that may be most adversely affected by climate change;
2. Develop best practice recommendations specific to rural communities for reducing municipal, school district, and residential fossil fuel consumption; fortifying critical transportation, electricity, and community infrastructure; and creating a distributed, redundant, storage-supported local electrical system;
3. Recommend a means of securely sharing self-identified vulnerable residents' information with State and local emergency responders and utilities;
4. Recommend tools for municipalities to assess their climate emergency preparedness, consider land use changes that reduce vulnerabilities, evaluate their financial capacity to address infrastructure resilience, and prioritize investment in that infrastructure;
5. Review existing planning efforts, including local and regional land use planning, transportation planning, energy planning and operations planning, and identify opportunities to better integrate and support these efforts in service of GHG emissions reductions, building resilience and designing a resilient future.
6. Utilize Vermont Emergency Management biennial reports to recommend program, policy, and legislative changes that will enhance municipal resilience to increased hazards presented by climate change.

In addition to these statutory mandates, it is anticipated that the sub-committee will consider additional areas of work including, but not necessarily limited to, the role of nature-based solutions in enhancing landscape resilience in the built environment. Work around nature-based solutions will require early and close coordination with the Agriculture and Ecosystems Sub-committee committee to establish the roles of each sub-committee related to adaptation and community resilience.

Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee

The Cross-Sector Mitigation Sub-committee will focus on comprehensively “identifying the most scientifically and technologically feasible strategies and programs” to achieve the GHG emissions reduction requirements of the GWSA. It should be noted that local and regional land use planning and decision-making has long-term impacts on GHG emissions that should be incorporated into the work of this Subcommittee. Initiatives, strategies, and programs found to be feasible will then be evaluated through economic analyses to determine the equity considerations, economic case, and relative cost-effectiveness of each strategy or program.

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The Cross-Sector Mitigation Sub-committee will establish a framework for consistently evaluating initiatives, strategies, and programs, with support from the Science and Data Subcommittee. The framework should include, but is not necessarily limited to, the following:

- GHG mitigation potential;
- Cost-effectiveness;
- Affordability and impacts on vulnerable populations;
- Ability to identify and track measurable outcomes;
- Demonstrated/proven effectiveness;
- Legal authority (existing or needed) to support implementation;
- Co-benefits.

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In service of this effort, it is anticipated that the Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee will need to establish sector-specific task leads to ensure the capacity and expertise needed in order to identify and evaluate a full range of sector-specific initiatives, strategies and programs. Because of the scope of this Subcommittee, the membership may need to be somewhat larger than the other Subcommittees.

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In preparing its annual GHG emissions inventory, the State of Vermont currently tracks emissions from the following sectors: agriculture; buildings (residential/commercial/industrial); electricity (consumption); fossil fuel; industrial processes; transportation; and waste. The GWSA also specifically calls for strategies that limit the use of chemicals and substances or products that contribute to climate change. It is anticipated that the Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee’s work will be organized consistent with these sectors, with particular attention given to the building and transportation sectors given the outsized role these sectors play in Vermont’s GHG emissions profile. The Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee will require early coordination with the Agriculture and Ecosystems Subcommittee to establish the roles of each subcommittee related to the agriculture sector, including where strategies related to agricultural emissions will be taken up. Once formed, this Subcommittee will determine a work structure regarding sectors to be reviewed and approved by the Council at its March meeting.

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Just Transitions Sub-committee

The Just Transitions Sub-committee will develop principles to guide the work of the other subcommittees to ensure that the initiatives, programs and strategies necessary to achieve the

State's GHG emission reduction requirements and build resilience and climate adaptation of Vermont communities and natural systems support all residents of the State fairly and equitably. The sub-committee will review the SOV Equity Impact Assessments as a starting place to inform the principles to guide this work, but will further consider job, economic and demographic impacts of various proposed recommendations set forth by other Sub-committees. Particular attention will be given to ensuring that climate policy is developed in a manner that is based on mutual respect and justice for all, free from any form of discrimination or bias.

It is anticipated that, once the set of principles that will be used to guide Vermont's climate have been established, members of the Just Transitions Sub-committee will: 1) offer tools or processes for evaluating both existing and recommended programs and strategies through a just transitions filter or lens, 2) to the extent they are able, join and participate in the other Sub-committees to ensure that these principles are fully integrated into the more technical components of this work; and, 3) review recommendations from other Sub-committees for their just transition impacts. This approach will help ensure that the initiatives, programs and strategies consider the disproportionate impact of climate change on rural, low income and marginalized communities and that programs and incentives for building resilience are accessible to all Vermonters and do not unfairly burden any groups, communities, geographic locations or economic sectors.

The Just Transitions Sub-committee will also have a leading role in designing a public participation plan that facilitates broad engagement to gain input from all residents of the State, paying particular attention to creating opportunities for rural, low income and marginalized communities to engage meaningful and with voice and influence. The Just Transitions Sub-committee will develop tool(s) that can be used to assess the efficacy of community engagement efforts related to the development of the Climate Action Plan.

[Agriculture and Ecosystems Sub-committee](#)

The Agriculture and Ecosystems Sub-committee shall focus on the role Vermont's natural and working lands play in carbon sequestration and storage, climate adaptation, and ecosystem and community resilience. This work shall emphasize opportunities for nature-based solutions in areas outside the built environment, including actions and policies that restore wetlands, increase carbon stored on agricultural and forest land and in forest products, and support healthy agricultural soils and local food systems.

Specifically, the Agriculture and Ecosystems Sub-committee shall:

1. Develop a full carbon budget for the State of Vermont that quantifies carbon emissions and sequestration associated with biomass growth, management and utilization, in support of the GWSA requirement to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 across all sectors
2. Identify initiatives, programs and strategies that achieve sequestration and storage of carbon and promote best management practices to achieve climate adaptation and resilience on natural working lands

3. Identify the co-benefits of strategies for such factors as water quality, quality of life, food security, and economic resilience and sustainability
4. Identify initiatives, programs and strategies for mitigation to reduce gross and net annual greenhouse gas emissions from Vermont's agricultural and forested working lands

Establishing the scope of work for this sub-committee will require close and early coordination with both the Cross-Sector Mitigation (CSM) and Rural Resilience and Adaptation sub-committees, particularly as related to opportunities for climate change work within natural and working landscape that extend beyond sequestration.

Science and Data Sub-committee

While the GWSA did not explicitly contemplate the need for a Science and Data Sub-committee, it did provide the opportunity for the Council to create other sub-committees to advise the Council and undertake the work needed to create the Plan. The Science and Data Sub-committee will be responsible for reviewing the latest information on direct and indirect effects of climate change, drawing on existing data and studies, as well as identifying critical scientific information needs. In addition, the Science and Data Sub-committee will be responsible for establishing an energy use and emissions baseline, including reviewing the suitability of Vermont's current GHG emissions inventory for assessing progress toward meeting the requirements of the GWSA.

Specifically, the Science and Data Sub-committee shall:

1. Work in partnership with the other sub-committees to advise on the best available science to inform their work.
2. Establish an energy use and emissions baseline based on current state and regional policies, as well as an assessment of options for meeting Vermont's energy needs through 2050, including appropriate allowances for efficiency and growth, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions in an economically viable and just manner.
 - a. Review the State of Vermont's approach to preparing the existing GHG emissions inventory and recommend modifications or adjustments, if needed, so that the inventory can serve as the basis for measuring progress toward meeting the GHG reductions requirements established in the GWSA.
3. Build scenarios based on the work of the Cross-Sector Mitigation Sub-committee and in concert with the technical contractors including:
 - a. The cost to the State of doing nothing in response to climate change; an emissions analysis of draft greenhouse gas reductions strategies proposed by the Cross-Sector Mitigation Sub-committee; and an economic analysis of the draft emissions- and adaptation-related strategies proposed by the sub-committees.
 - b. Reflect the relative contribution of each sector or category of source of emissions.

4. Identify critical scientific information needs pertaining to priority research and monitoring of state-based changes in the climate and its impacts.
 - o Strengthen research and development and monitoring of climate mitigation and adaptation practices.
 - o Bring in technical and regional experts to advise on, collaborate on and discuss climate science.
5. Recommendations for monitoring and tracking the Climate Plan's progress over time.

Major Milestones for Sub-Committees

The following are the major milestones for the work of the sub-committees. As the Just Transitions and Science and Data sub-committees are largely in service to the other sub-committees, an understanding of these milestones will be necessary to inform the scope and timing of their work in support of the Rural Resilience and Adaptation, Cross-Sector Mitigation and Agriculture and Ecosystems sub-committees.

1. Sub-committee composition will be finalized by the end of February.
2. Sub-committee workgroups, if deemed necessary for the cross-sector mitigation sub-committee, will be identified and staffed by mid-March.
3. Each sub-committee will present the full proposed scope of its work to the full Climate Council for consideration at the March VCC meeting, including contractor work needed to enable sub-committees to craft their recommendations.
4. Evaluates potential pathways for presentation to the Council at its April meeting. The pathways should be thought of as packages of strategies – An example of a pathway could be “90,000 EVs on the road by 2025” which you would also link to the specific reduction in emissions.
5. Draft framework and strategies for presentation to the Council at its May meeting, including policy options, and cost and equity considerations.
6. Participate in public engagement process around draft framework and strategies to be completed by end of June.
7. Revise framework and strategies and prepare recommendations, including financing options, based on public comment for presentation to the Council at its July meeting.
8. Work with your team to knit together the work of the sub-committees into the Climate Action Plan in August.
9. Council will review and revise the Climate Action Plan in September.
10. Public engagement in October.
11. Finalize the Plan in November.