

## **Vermont Climate Action Commission**

Thursday, June 14, 2018

1:00-4:00

Agency of Natural Resources Annex

190 Junction Rd., Berlin, VT

**Commissioners Present:** Riley Allen (for June Tierney), Marie Audet, Paul Costello, Matt Cota, Thomas Donahue, David Dutcher (for Michele Boomhower), Bethany Fleishman, Liz Gamache, Ken Jones (for Michael Schirling), Bill Laberge, Linda McGinnis, Johanna Miller, Robert Turner, Peter Walke, Jennifer Wallace-Brodeur

### **Agenda Items**

#### **Welcome / May Meeting Notes**

Co-Chair Walke noted that good progress has been made on the report sections. He specifically thanked the formatting and funding working groups for their efforts.

May meeting notes – approved unanimously, with 2 abstentions (Jones, McGinnis)

#### **Report Format Discussion and Example**

Co-Chair Walke and Commissioner McGinnis reviewed the draft commission report (attached) and described how it was developed. The draft identifies four broad categories with a vision section for each one:

- Home and Workplace (Building Energy)
- Getting Around (Transportation)
- Jobs and the Economy (Climate Economy)
- Community and Landscape (Smart Growth and Sequestration)

The co-chairs and commission still need to develop a process to certify that the recommendations are supported by the commission as a whole. Some recommendations need attention, some are already underway, some may need better definition, and some may not be included in the final report. The primary criterion for screening recommendations and actions is the level of greenhouse gas reduction expected. The infographics will be used to communicate the order of magnitude of impact of each recommendation.

Co-chair Walke provided the schedule for the next 6 weeks:

- 6/28 Working group final edits due to co-chairs
- 7/5 Circulation of draft report for review
- 7/12 Commission meeting to review report; vote on recommendations
- By 7/31 Commission submits report to the Governor

The commission discussed at length the opportunity for public comment on the draft and/or final report. Co-chair Walke noted that the commission engaged in significant public outreach at the start of this process. The commissioners agreed that the report needs to fully document how the recommendations were arrived at. This will be included in a report appendix. The commissioners also

agreed that public comment at the conclusion of the process was important and valuable. The commissioners agreed to propose that an opportunity for public comment would occur at the time when the report is delivered to the governor. The commissioners were also open to a ceremonial meeting where the Commission submits the final report to the Governor.

### **Discussion of report draft / infographics**

The co-chairs recommended to the working groups that they should list their recommendations in the order of what they believed was most important. The commission reviewed the infographic proposal that was circulated (attached). The commissioners discussed the Feasibility criterion, and agreed it was intended to evaluate the overall financial, administrative and political barriers to implementation. The commissioners agreed to change the Feasibility criterion to Ease, with more icons equal to greater ease of implementation. Ken Jones at ACCD is working on a methodology that would allow the working groups to categorize costs and savings in a consistent way. However, some of the recommendations will be difficult to evaluate quantitatively. Co-chair Walke assigned Jones and commissioners McGinnis and Turner the task of reviewing the infographic proposal and making any required updates for consistency. The working group recommendation summaries will also be updated to acknowledge the current status of any activities (e.g. already underway, planned, not planned).

### **Funding Discussion**

Co-chair Costello reviewed the draft Leadership and Investments section of the draft report. It highlights the fundamental importance of addressing GHG emissions, emphasizes the importance of governmental leadership, identifies the benefits of action, and proposes possible funding sources for supporting the recommendations (ex. general funds, bonding, carbon market). Co-chair Costello encouraged the commissioners to review and comment on this draft. He will prepare a revised version for review at the next meeting.

The commissioners asked if more recent greenhouse gas emission data is available to reference in the report. Commission staff from ACCD and ANR will be asked to provide the latest available data.

### **Recommendation Discussion by Working Group**

Co-chair Walke asked each working group to review their respective sections and identify their highest priority recommendations and any potentially controversial recommendations.

#### Transportation Electrification (Wallace-Brodeur)

Commissioner Wallace-Brodeur reported on the very recent settlement of the consumer protection lawsuit by the Office of the Attorney General and Volkswagen. The settlement will result in an almost \$4M deposit into the General Fund later this year. After discussion, the commissioners agreed that a timely reaction to this settlement announcement was important. Commissioner Wallace-Brodeur will draft a letter to the governor, house speaker, senate president pro tempore, the attorney general (w/thank you), copied to relevant legislative committee chairs from the co-chairs on behalf of the commission requesting that these funds be devoted to targeted EV incentives for consumers. The commissioners authorized the co-chairs to submit the letter on their behalf with no additional commission review.

### Transportation Demand Management (Fleishman, Miller)

Many of the recommendations in this section are taken from the Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP). Many are not measurable but are important to be acknowledged.

### Building Energy (Allen)

Weatherization, advanced wood heat and building electrification are the “big gets”. There is some controversy regarding building electrification – the electricity system is stressed during winter, and this recommendation proposes increasing load during the winter. This recommendation needs to be implemented simultaneously with storage and other clean energy solutions.

### Carbon Sequestration (Turner)

The draft section was presented in two parts which will be merged. Recommendations are not in any priority order. Sequestration was not identified as a strategy in the CEP but has evolved as an issue. Goals are to recognize the value of sequestration and value of farmers/landowners that have implemented (or are implementing) projects and measures. The narrative acknowledges that activities are occurring in this area; that conservation practices have possibility of immense benefits but are difficult to quantify; that more information on carbon accounting in this sector is necessary to support sequestration activities; and that only limited additional investment is necessary.

Meghan Giroux from Interlace Agroforestry Farm in NY commented that agroforestry has been overlooked as a carbon sequestration strategy in Vermont and elsewhere. Agroforestry also provides important co-benefits in biodiversity and economic livelihood.

### Jobs and the Economy (Jones)

The draft section identifies two key sectors – clean grid modernization and production of advanced wood heat fuels. The narrative includes a definition of grid modernization. Commissioner Laberge will provide additional text regarding the role of storage.

The commissioners discussed how to evaluate business incentive recommendations (characterized as “precursor” actions) that in the short term do not result in any greenhouse gas emission reductions but may indirectly result in reductions in the long-term. Guidance from co-chair Walke was to not attribute greenhouse gas reductions to these actions directly.

### Smart Growth (Walke)

Co-chair Walke noted that the draft inadvertently duplicated the “Develop Smart Growth Impact Metrics” table. A key shortcoming in this area is the lack of knowledge and data regarding parcelization and development patterns. As suggested the work group will consider revising the recommendations to make them more action-oriented.

### **Public Comment**

Doug Grant (Putney) – Mr. Grant reported that he has just installed heat pumps. He wants to demonstrate to his community what can be done to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. He was able to afford heat pumps but many in his community cannot. These measures need money. 600 households in Putney need to get off propane. His goal is to spread the word around town.

Jaiel Pulskamp (350VT) – Ms. Pulskamp was pleased to hear mention of regenerative agriculture and sequestration. However, there needs to be more emphasis on other measures such as

herbicide/pesticide use reduction. Also, a public comment period is very important. The governor may personally object to some of the recommendations, but strong public support may change his mind. Recommendations can be used going forward regardless of who the governor is.

Meghan Giroux (Interlace Agroforestry Farm) – Ms. Giroux does not want lack of knowledge in particular areas to impede a recommendation. She noted she was really glad to have made the effort to attend today's meeting and intends to continue to engage in this process.

Jill Wilcox (Sharon Two Rivers Action Coalition) – Her group is dedicated to reducing carbon emissions. She thanked the commission for its work so far and asked that the meeting materials be made available. Co-chair Walke responded that all meeting materials will be posted on the commission's internet page.

John Hulasz (CVCA) – Mr. Hulasz noted that this year's legislative session has been disappointing. Addressing the climate change issue requires proactivity. If the legislature is quibbling over dollars and cents then no real progress can be made. He would like the commission to be permanently established. It is difficult to make plans for longer than five years but there is a need to think longer term. There needs to be more public involvement. Regarding economics, actions will require a huge investment over decades. The state can borrow money and provide loan guarantees for actions. Contrary to opinion of some, public investments and incentives crowds-in private investments. He was glad to hear that bio-sequestration is now on the agenda. He proposed that the state could set up an agency to survey farms and parcels and market carbon sequestration. This would provide income to farmers and encourage topsoil conservation. These credits could be marketed to individuals by the state directly, not through existing carbon markets.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 4:05pm