

VECAN

VERMONT ENERGY & CLIMATE
ACTION NETWORK

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November 2020 E-News

Dear Local Energy Leaders,

As our nation collectively stands on pins and needles — awaiting final results of, arguably, the most important and contentious election in modern history — we remain committed to continuing clean energy and climate progress in Vermont. We wanted to share a few updates and opportunities. Find out far more below about:

- **Standing Up the New Vermont Climate Council** - Last week, the State announced its first steps to begin the implementation process for the new climate-accountability law — the Global Warming Solutions Act — starting first by finalizing appointments to the 23-member Climate Council. [Read more here](#) and below.
- **Need Help — or Know Others Who Do — With Utility Bills?** - There is a time-limited opportunity for Vermonters to apply for grant funds to help with any utility bill arrearages. This opportunity is available to everyone in need, regardless of your utility. The application deadline is November 30th so learn how you can apply below.
- **Save the Date for VECAN's 13th Annual Conference Beginning December 5!** - Each year, this event brings together local energy leaders, clean energy businesses, statewide organizations and other partners to advance climate action in Vermont. This year's conference will be held online beginning December 5th and will continue throughout the week. Stay tuned for registration info coming soon.
- **Attend REV2020 to Learn About Grid Modernization and Resilience** - Join Renewable Energy Vermont for the second event in their REV2020 Virtual Conference Series focusing on the topic of Resilience. Hear from Kelly Speakes-Bachman, CEO of the US Energy Storage Association, as the keynote presenter. [Register here](#) and find more about the event below.
- **Join Your Regional Planning Commission's "Step Up To Button Up" Workshop** - ButtonUp is organizing "Step Up To Button Up" Workshops with your regional planning commission to bring together residents across your county to share information about how to take advantage of energy savings in your own home. [Click here](#) to find out when your regional planning commission is hosting their workshop.
- **Moving Beyond the Bare Minimum: Significantly Scaling Weatherization Investments and Opportunities** - Join ButtonUp on 11/11 for a discussion on weatherization advocacy with VNRC's Energy Program Di-

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We are always looking for great stories of local action for our blog, social media and as helpful resources for our network. Please consider sending along anything you or others have accomplished or are working on by responding to this email or emailing rkuster@vnrc.org

About Us

VECAN is a network of statewide Vermont organizations helping communities across the Green Mountain State to reduce energy costs and climate impacts through conservation, increased energy efficiency and conversion to renewable energy sources.

VECAN's mission is to start, support and strengthen town energy committees.

Committee Changes?

Help us keep our network up to date! Email changes in committee

rector/VECAN Coordinator, Johanna Miller and Norwich Energy Committee Leader, Linda Gray. [Register here](#) and find more below.

leadership or contact info to rkuster@vnrc.org

- **Did You Miss the Transportation and Climate Initiative Webinars Last Week?** - You can access the recordings to get an overview of the prospects and potential benefits of this cap-and-invest program for the carbon-intensive transportation sector. Find more information and the links to the recordings below.
- **What Happens When Cycling is as Normal as Breathing?"** - Find out by attending one of the virtual screenings of the Dutch film "Why We Cycle" hosted by Local Motion and Vermont Clean Cities Coalition on 11/19 and 12/3. More below...
- **Opportunity to Virtually Tour Sustainable Vermont Homes!** - The Sustainable Energy Outreach Network (SEON) is hosting its [5th Annual Sustainable Home Tour](#) on 11/7 from 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. to showcase the technologies and processes that make these homes sustainable. [Register for the event here](#) and learn more below.
- **"Why aren't New Americans taking advantage of home weatherization programs?"** - This VTDigger article brings attention to an important energy equity issue in the state. [Read the full article here.](#)
- **Sustainable Transportation Vermont's Speaker Series Schedule is Live!** - STVT is hosting a Speaker Series every Friday at 12 p.m. live on their Facebook page. You'll hear from Vermont Rail Advisory Council, Marianne Giguère, VTrans and AllEarth Renewables about a variety of transportation topics. [Find more information here](#) and below.

As always, thanks for all that you do.

Best,

Bekah Kuster, Community Energy Coordinator, AmeriCorps Member, VECAN
802-223-2328 ext. 116 - rkuster@vnrc.org

First Steps: Standing Up the New Vermont Climate Council



Last week, the State announced its first steps to begin the implementation process for the new climate-accountability law — the Global Warming Solutions Act. That started with finalizing the Legislature's appointments to the Vermont Climate Council, the newly formed body under the Solutions Act. Fifteen legislative appointments were made, representing low income, small business, youth, the farming community and many other perspectives and expertise needed to do this work well. VNRC's Energy and Climate Program Director/VECAN Coordinator Johanna Miller and Board member Chad Farrell are among the appointees to the council, which will have its first meeting on November 20 and, from there, develop a plan to meet emissions reductions required by the new law. [Read more here.](#)

Need Help — or Know Others Who Do — With Utility Bills?

Residential or non-residential customers with utility bills over 60 days past due — at-



tributable to economic hardship due to loss of income caused by the pandemic — may be eligible for grant support. The support is available through the Vermont COVID-19 Arrearage Assistance Program (VCAPP) run by the Vermont Department of Public Service. It was created by the Vermont Legislature and funded with \$8 million from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the State of Vermont Coronavirus Relief Fund.

If you are an individual or business facing pandemic-induced hardship in these challenging times and could benefit from this program, find out far more about eligibility requirements and [apply today here](#). The application deadline is November 30, 2020. People who do not have access to the online application can contact their local Community Action Agency, for assistance with the application process. [Read how and why utilities like Vermont Electric Coop are offering this program to their members](#).

Save the Date for VECAN's 13th Annual Conference Beginning December 5!



We are excited to announce that we will be holding the 13th annual Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network *Community Energy and Climate Action* Conference as a virtual event this year! While it remains necessary to physically social distance, it is more important than ever to stay con-

nected. This event has always brought together local energy leaders, clean energy businesses, statewide organizations and other partners to advance climate action in Vermont. We plan to do that again this year, knowing the magnitude of both the challenge and the opportunity we face when it comes to climate change.

The event will begin, as always, on the first Saturday in December – December 5th. Please mark your calendar and plan to join us then for the first part of this conference. We will start this multi-day event by framing up the current context with a deep post-election analysis, a state-of-the-state on energy and climate action and an overview of big, timely, potentially transformative opportunities, including the recently enacted Vermont Global Warming Solutions Act. Starting on Monday, December 7th, we will host concurrent workshops and other interesting sessions throughout the week. Please stay tuned for registration information and far more detail.

Don't Miss REV2020 Resilience Session on November 18th



Renewable Energy Vermont is hosting its second session of its Virtual Conference Series on November 18, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Join hundreds of others from across the renewable energy sector for an incredible virtual gathering fo-

cused on the technology and policy innovations that we need to create a resilient and modern 21st century grid. Look forward to a keynote presentation from Kelly Speakes-Backman, CEO of the US Energy Storage Association followed by an engaging panel discussion with Matt Nelson, Chair of the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities, Dr. Jason Shafer, CEO of Northview Weather and Brett Cullen, Director of Business Development at ENGIE Energy Storage. There will be lots of networking opportunities and a tech showcase highlighting the cutting edge in energy storage technology.

If you are a volunteer energy committee member not employed in the clean energy sector, REV is offering you a discounted registration rate of \$25! [Learn more and register here!](#)

Register for Your Regional Planning Commission's "Step Up To Button Up" Workshop



ButtonUp
Vermont

Looking to get answers to your questions about weatherization? Want to know what savings and incentives are available for all sorts of energy efficiency projects? Join an informational webinar hosted by your regional planning commission, which will bring together residents across your county to share information about how to take advantage of energy savings in your own home.

Here are the RPCs hosting Step Up to Button Up workshops

this month:

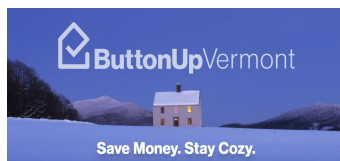
11/12 at 5:30 pm - Northwest Regional Planning Commission

11/18 at 12:00 pm - Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission

11/23 at 6:00 pm - Lamoille County Planning Commission

[Click here](#) for more information and to find out when your RPC will be hosting their workshop.

Register for This Week's Weatherization Wednesday Webinar on November 11th, 12:00-1:00 p.m.



Despite climate pollution reduction targets, as well as a long-held statutory goal to retrofit 80,000 homes, Vermont is failing to weatherize leaky buildings at the scale of what's required. A dramatic ramp in the number of homes weatherized is needed and, in so doing, can help thousands of

Vermonters save energy, save money, improve home comfort, enhance public health and take a significant bite out of our carbon footprint.

Why is the state falling so short? What's needed to dramatically increase the number of weatherization projects undertaken — especially those serving low-to moderate-income Vermonters? What's happening to shift this reality? And what you can you do to help Vermont make more progress? Join a discussion with Vermont Natural Resources Council's Energy Program Director/VECAN Coordinator Johanna Miller and Norwich Energy Committee Leader Linda Gray for a deep dive on state program and policy conversations and the expanding, locally-led effort of energy committees across Vermont. [Register for the webinar here!](#)

Watch Last Week's TCI Webinar Recordings



For those who couldn't tune in for last week's webinars on the Transportation and Climate Initiative -- a potential regional program to reduce transportation climate pollution and reinvest revenues into equitable,

affordable, clean mobility solutions -- you can now access the recordings.

"The Transportation & Climate Initiative: Opportunities and Updates" hosted by VBSR on 10/28

In this webinar, hear how Vermont's transportation sector makes up the lion's share of our greenhouse gas emissions and how our lingering reliance on fossil fuels channels billions of dollars out of the state's economy each year. Hear a detailed overview from Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Peter Walke on TCI, including key equity considerations and next steps in the policymaking process. And listen to a review from Jordan Stutt with the Acadia Institute on how TCI can drive transportation investments that create

economic mobility, family-sustaining jobs, and more resilient infrastructure as well as what's happening in neighboring states. [You can view the recording of this webinar here.](#)

“Health Benefits of the Transportation and Climate Initiative” hosted by Sustainable Transportation Vermont on 10/30

In this webinar, get an overview of the preliminary health benefits of the TCI from Jonathon Buonocore, a research scientist at the Center for Climate Health and the Global Environment and member of the Transportation, Equity, Climate and Health (TRECH) Project team. Hear from Jared Ulmer, the Climate & Health Program Manager at the Vermont Department of Health about the findings of a recent project that looked at what health benefits Vermont could derive from meeting its transportation goals set out in the state's Comprehensive Energy Plan. Finally, learn from Dan Quinlan, an independent consultant and founder of the Vermont Climate and Health Alliance (VTCHA) and SolaVida, about how public health benefits are being considered through health impact modeling including where the modeling is strong and why the current methodology is inherently underestimating the health benefits. [You can view the recording of this webinar here.](#)

Register for a Free Virtual Screening of “Why We Cycle



Join Local Motion and Vermont Clean Cities Coalition, for a free virtual screening of the Dutch film, “Why We Cycle” followed by a live discussion with a panel of local stakeholders and experts in the fields of sustainability and public transportation infrastructure. The film will be screened for the general public on November 19th (7-9 pm) and for industry practitioners on December 3rd (12-2 pm), but you are welcome to attend whichever best fits your schedule.

‘Why We Cycle,’ takes you on a ride with ordinary cyclists and specialists from a variety of disciplines to uncover some obvious, but even more hidden effects of cycling on people, societies, and the organization of cities. [Find more information and register for the event here!](#)

Get a Virtual Tour of Sustainable Homes in Vermont



The Sustainable Energy Outreach Network (SEON) is hosting its 5th Annual Sustainable Home Tour on Saturday, November 7th, 2020 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. This event showcases homes and the design/construction teams whose work demonstrates a commitment to high performance building, sustainable materials, durability, indoor air quality, and renewable energy. It's a “Show & Tell” opportunity where you'll be taken on a virtual tour of the home and sustainable features will be highlighted. Learn about the technologies and processes that make these homes sustainable. There

will also be an opportunity to ask questions of the builders.

[Click here](#) to find more information and a preview of the homes that will be on the virtual tour. [Register for this free event here](#) and watch the tour online from the comfort of your home.

VTDigger: “Why aren't New Americans taking advantage of home weatherization programs?”

Virginie Diambou, the director of racial equity at the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity, explains why New Americans aren't taking advantage of home weatherization programs. Energy costs are a big burden for many New Americans and a poorly insulated



home means even higher costs. “While weatherization programs already exist to help people weatherize their homes, there are challenges in ensuring those programs are accessible to New Americans.”

One challenge is that home weatherization may not be a top priority for new arrivals and in many cases, they may not understand what it is or why it’s important during

long Vermont winters. Language can also be a barrier to weatherizing homes as 14% of Burlington city residents speak a language other than English at home. Despite this, information about weatherization programs is most often only available in English. Diambou is helping to make these programs more accessible by raising awareness about weatherization among members of the New American community in her role.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Check Out Sustainable Transportation Vermont’s Speaker Series!



STVT’s November and December Speaker Series schedule is live! Check out the following Facebook live events happening every Friday at 12 PM EST:

11/13 - “Increasing Bike Ridership in Cold Climate City” featuring Montréal City Councilor, Marianne Giguère.

11/20 - “The impact of COVID-19 on Public Transit Ridership” featuring Dan Currier, the Public Transit Coordinator at VTrans.

12/4 - “Rethinking Transportation to Reduce Embedded Carbon” featuring David Blittersdorf, President/CEO of AllEarth Renewables.

These free public events are available to watch on [STVT’s Facebook Page here.](#)

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