

**Discussion Prompt:** *What are some ways that the themes and topics discussed today of equity in energy and climate work show up in your community and work, and/or where would you like to be doing more?*

## Questions:

### General:

- How do we engage with others who may support climate action but don't connect to the language that we are used to using (scientific/economic analysis)?
- Some feel that their small towns are ignored. How can we help them get grants etc?
- How do we also get people with money or access to money to make the switch?
- How can we map the quality of housing?
- What is the most effective role for energy committees that is complimentary with the work of efficiency programs, state gov't, etc.?
- How best to reach folks to educate and to listen, especially those who are low-income and have no internet? Besides knocking on doors.
- How do we make more equitable systems/programs now while also making sure we take the time to think through and be intentional about how we do that?
- Who are the best messengers to bring resources to people in the community? Some people are resistant to change in their community, even positive change. How to break through?
- How to wade through grants and funding options?
- Why are no public health entities included in the dialogue today?
- How best fight NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) with YIMBY (Yes In My Back Yard)?
  - **Participant response:** Provide examples of YIMBY and its benefits :) advocate at your town level for projects to go through.
- Has anyone read The Ministry for the Future? How can we create "agency" for future humans and the rest of the planet's species so that our perspective isn't the ROI of present citizens?
- Residential Building Energy Standards energy code needs some real compliance infrastructure. How can the legislature support this?
- What are unexplored avenues to reach the people who most need help w/ energy upgrades, weatherization, etc?
- How do we affect wide-scale culture change?
- There must be other programs that can be as successful as Window Dressers. What can they be?
- Education: We also need to work with the general public to help them understand why they benefit by flipping the switch faster. What are the ways we can do that?
- We should support farmers to install community solar and try silvopasture. What is the status of the Climate Action Plan for incentives for this?
- What help is being given to municipalities to be better informed on what is going to be required and how to find resources to achieve them?
- Need to reach 650k+ voters for most energy/GHG issues. How can we do this?

### Transportation:

- 

#### **Thermal:**

- A bit worried that the lack of workforce will affect the use of the American Rescue Plan Act and other funds that have time limits. Who can increase salaries for Climate Action Plan organization weatherization people?
- How do we engage mobile home park residents with Weatherization Assistance Programs?

#### **Electric:**

- Can we legislate better rules for the Public Utility Commission which is currently allowing piping methane for miles but not wind and solar?

## **Thoughts:**

#### **General:**

- We talked about how overwhelming it is to know where to start! With lots of important topics and lots of resources, it is hard to know where to focus.
- Accessibility components of these systems
- We need to find a strong voice of leadership at the top that can get people thinking and motivate real action.
- We need to get past the easy choice of false solutions that hinder real climate action.
- Need for tracking metrics & ways to model/anticipate policy effects.
- We need great advice from more experienced energy committee folks!
- In village around older homes, the soils are contaminated with lead paint. This makes it hard to raise your own food. Equity issue.
- Problem of protecting forest areas from development & how to limit the impact of development where it occurs.
- Use Energy Committees! Fund them to be more effective.
- Efficiency Vermont needs to get up to speed on how to take advantage of federal incentives from the IRA.
- I think we need to start at both the bottom and the top. We need to bring the public, particularly low-income and marginalized people into the process.
- A colleague in our small group wisely brought up the issue of senior VTers and the need to ensure Climate Equity/Resilience, etc. for them (us!)
- We need an enforceable building energy code -- beyond stretch code!
- In our breakout we focused on Residential Energy Code Compliance. This is an equity issue because the cost of operation and maintenance is often not taken into account.
- Education for legislators is important. Energy is complicated, and most folks are energy blind. They don't always do it well, and the laws we pass must tell them exactly what has to be done.
- Local and state representatives receive more complaints than compliments. Let them know what they are doing well.
- If you are satisfied with your representatives, it is important to let them know.
- We need to convince our legislators that there is no time to waste; we've done that for too long.

- Energy Committees can play a huge role in representing interest in climate change to town and state decision-makers.
- Super important to participate at the local and state levels as these policy discussions are taking place.
- The Public Utility Commission cannot be trusted to evaluate aesthetic impacts when permitting renewable energy projects. The legislature must tell them.
- Typically the Public Utility Commission is given free rein to implement new legislation.
- The Public Utility Commission must start weighing climate change costs and job benefits when considering whether or not to approve renewable energy projects

#### **Transportation:**

- When we compare vehicles (gas and electric) we see a mid-size car. This is probably not the car option for lower-income people. Think from their point of view.
- Afraid that people/communities don't pay enough attention to the actual implementation of "develop in centers." Need to figure out how to do that.
- Love the Mileage Smart program to help low and moderate-income folks get into more fuel-efficient vehicles including Electric Vehicles. Should be expanded and made permanent.

#### **Thermal:**

- Code enforcement is critical. Weatherization efforts are not enough. Weatherization jobs are so hard. Building right the first time is better for workers.
- Heat pumps operate at a lower cost than fossil fuels.
- The cost to operate heat pumps seems cost prohibitive.
- Weatherization for renters is critical.
- We need funding for landlords to weatherize. As a landlord, I am enthusiastic about making weatherization and energy improvements, but they are cost prohibitive.

#### **Electric:**

- I would love an update on Public Utility Commission / utility and regulatory hurdles to renewable energy permitting (solar and wind) and what we can do about them.

## **Ideas/Actions:**

#### **General:**

- Get behind 2-3 campaigns that all communities can participate in.
- If we had a "Contractor Registry" we could quickly and easily keep them up to date on opportunities.
- Regenerative Agriculture, or at least no GMOs, pesticides, or chemical fertilizers.
- We need Easy-to-Read materials and curriculum with understanding of Project Programs.
- Outreach is important to give info to people who may not be on Front Porch Forum. Local farmer's market, handouts at Food Shelf that is trusted.
- The definition of affordable housing must include O&M costs in all public discussions as well as funding and permitting processes.
- Affinity groups focused on reaching under-served.

- A few towns in the Upper Valley want the legislature to allow towns to choose Home Energy Rating System rating as the only way to comply with Residential Building Energy Standards (ie, allow towns to eliminate the weak self-certification paths).
- More aggressive time-of-use electric rate structures and broad public messaging about benefits are important for people to be better electricity consumers.
- Create an Inflation Reduction Act cheat sheet, with a particular focus on low-income/BIPOC access opportunities for energy committees.
- Incentives: real estate evaluations based on climate improvements.
- Keep up the Efficiency VT incentives. More education and outreach for this.
- Broad public messaging about climate and energy is essential. Constant cues are necessary to change behaviors.
- Residential energy code requirements are quite weak... could have different levels that might give the incentive to improve energy code.
- We need to train climate advocates on the most effective methods of communicating with their communities. I recommend "Saving Us" by Kathrine Hayhoe as a resource.
- Equity: low income and underserved communities are often renters. We need regulations and incentives for landlords.
- Re-imagine planning and zoning bylaws. Simplify and make it easier to make housing and public transportation more accessible.
- Connect new Vermonters with baseline information/access to programs and incentives.

#### **Transportation:**

- For multifamily property owners that will install electric vehicle charging stations, utility cos. should have a program to pay to upgrade service from the street.
- I like the idea of an annual vehicle tax based on weight and mileage to fund road maintenance instead of fuel taxes. Electric vehicles and Hummers weigh more and have greater impacts on roads.
- We need more parking lots with electric vehicle chargers close to other sources of public transportation.
- Charging stations in rural Vermont
- Free Uber-style ride sharing such as MyRide in Montpelier, all around Vermont.
- Limit cars in downtown areas by providing free parking and rides into downtown.
- Need to improve electric vehicle infrastructure....transformers are antiquated and can't handle level 2 chargers. Attempt to push the cost of new transformer on user.
- Make sure electric vehicle chargers are regularly maintained!

#### **Thermal:**

- Window Dressers community initiative is a very effective way to gather folks, support low-income people, and heat homes.
- We talked about the Window Dressers program to provide custom-built inserts for insulating drafty windows at low cost to homeowners.
- Window Dresser project needs to connect with landlords for their approval to install window inserts for their tenants.
- The Clean Heat Standard benefits need to be socialized and marketed early to build constituent support.

- A fossil fuel surcharge is a more efficient revenue stream to implement clean heat opportunities for Vermonters than the complexity envisioned in last year's Clean Heat Standard bill.
- Incentives for heat pumps for renters

**Electric:**

- Community Solar - we need to persuade or change the Public Utility Commission!