

Summary Notes from Maine Climate Council

October 23, 2024

Overview

The Maine Climate Council held its Quarterly Meeting from 9am - 1pm on October 23, 2024 to discuss and build agreement around final revisions to the strategies in the updated Climate Action Plan. The meeting was held in person at the DHHS Building in Augusta, ME. 37 people attended the meeting, and another 69 observed online. Agenda Items included:

- Review revisions since the outline was presented in September including
 - Updates were made based on public input presented at the Sept 25 meeting and Councilor feedback, and the key targets proposed are based on the emissions modeling.
- Identify any “must-discuss” issues, then systematically work through them, agreeing on a set of notes.

See full meeting video here: <https://youtu.be/kcryga5AvMc>

See slides here: <https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/2024-10/10.23.24%20MCC%20meeting%20slides.pdf>

See Maine Won't Wait Draft here:

<https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/2024-10/Maine%20Wont%20Wait%20Draft%2010.15.24.pdf>

Below are high-level summary notes from the meeting.

Welcome

Maine Climate Council Co-Chairs Hannah Pingree, Director of the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future and Commissioner Melanie Loyzim, Department of Environmental Protection, opened the meeting. Hannah introduced Samantha Horn, new Director of the Maine Office of Community Affairs.

Update on Engagement with Tribes

Maine Climate Council Co-Chairs Hannah Pingree and Melanie Loyzim, have been meeting with Tribal leaders to discuss a potential tribal collaboration forum on climate issues. At the Tribes' request, Tribes were not included in the work of the Mitchell Center to engage with vulnerable Maine populations as part of the climate plan update process.

Overview of Targets and Modeling

Melanie Loyzim led the Council through a review of targets for emissions reductions. The emissions modeling process explored targets across scenarios targets for 2030 and 2050 and provided additional and revised targets for the Council to consider for the 2024 plan.

Document Revisions

The following revisions were made to the plan after the meeting on September 25th:

- **Strategy A: Transportation** – Added specific actions to reduce vehicle miles traveled through public and active transportation, added first responder training for battery safety, added section on transportation resilience.
- **Strategy B: Buildings** – Added detail to housing recommendation
- **Strategy C: Clean Energy** – Added grid resilience as an action
- **Strategy D: Jobs** – Added full details to chapter, incl. target for new Registered Apprentices
- **Strategy E: Natural and Working Lands and Waters** – Strengthened references to increasing resilience, including nature-based solutions
- **Strategy F: Resilience** – Consolidated Land Use recommendations into one, strengthened language around working waterfronts
- **Strategy G: Engage with Maine People** – Added full details including navigator programs and outreach for businesses
- **All** – added recommendations from last plan that were not addressed by the working groups

The Council discussed these revisions, offered feedback and raised additional pending issues. The main points from this discussion follow below:

- **Energy costs and the impact of these strategies**
 - To the overall introduction and Strategy C, add a clear sentence, and cite the four Strategy C recommendations as evidence of this priority such as: “Affordability of energy for Maine homes and businesses is a priority for this climate plan and must remain a priority as the plan is implemented.”
 - Strengthen 4th paragraph on page 20
 - Add importance of reducing fuel price volatility, increasing predictability.
 - Include the additional savings (indoor air quality, etc.)
- **Be clearer about the costs of business as usual**
 - We have some examples such as stronger culverts that survived the storms. Add a narrative that speaks to other, non-quantifiable costs.
 - Refer to the 2020 report for language that points to the cost of inaction. Costs have gone up.
- **The document has too many non-committal words and verbs. Can we switch them out?**
 - Examples: Enhance, cooperate, help, continue to participate, focus
 - This works when accompanied by metrics, but overall language should be more overt.

- **Some of the infrastructure needs to get out of harm's way, or not be built in harm's way.**
 - Page 8-9 Transportation resilience: Use modeling to consider options for infrastructure that is most at risk.
 - Pg 44: on "get out of harm's way" – add: "proactive long-term planning and facilitated dialogue."
- **Reference the Resilience Commission to underline the importance of community resilience.**
 - Highlight this upfront and show that Resilience is a priority of this plan.
- **Name priorities and agree on how we frame this plan for the reader/public.**
 - Urgency of resilience. For instance, a priority of the fishing community is working waterfront infrastructure. Use the Resilience Commission as an example.
 - Protecting Maine – speaking to that directly. Inaction is bad and will alter who we are.
 - The Council has a statutory responsibility. Focus also on the daily experience of people, businesses.
 - Highlight the economic opportunity from this transition.
- **Funding: Clearer call out about how to leverage private and philanthropic funding, the needed amounts, and bolder language**
 - Currently missing from the document:
 - Need to mention how we leverage private, philanthropic, federal and state funding. Be clear how the State can take action here, e.g., financing vehicles to help with upfront costs, identifying long-term sustainable funding. The Resilience Bank is a start but needs to be more specific with that recommendation too (more specific outcome in 2026).
- **Ground source heat pumps and geothermal – not clear in the plan**
 - Buildings Working Group co-chairs to make some language suggestions.
- **Building code – how the stretch code interacts with adopting codes.**
 - Revise actions:
 - Adopt the code more rapidly to be in the current cycle than be lagging. Will result in more frequent and smaller changes. That's a good thing. (check about unintended consequences for CLT)
 - Add a recommendation of a state building inspector and apply compliance state-wide (and the law provides for third-party inspectors)
 - Educate not only code officers, also the design community and building community
 - Relates to Community Rating System
- **Strategy F is very long.**
 - Options:
 - Give materials management / trash its own section
 - Give land use as its own section
 - Create a separate section about intersecting issues
 - Strategy F has many recommendations and could be made easier to read.

- **Include mention of all the other plans that include climate action and create a reading list.**
- **Page 50: Strengthen public health monitoring.** Councilors would like to see stronger language. Not only monitoring, can we build up the monitoring infrastructure.
- **Impact of disasters on emergency management.** Currently we do not do an assessment on public health after emergencies, only a rapid assessment on the humans themselves.
- **Page 39: Language about supporting farming, forestry and fisheries misses the mark.** It does not adequately address size and scale. Fisheries are a lifeline for coastal communities. Add language that speaks to communities that lack other economic opportunities.
- **Land use: we need a more comprehensive land use plan that matches our needs.**
 - Could be in land use section and/or energy section.
 - Consider language about a policy directive that addresses where to site renewable energy – make it holistic and proactive.
- **Reference and link to detailed Working Group documents for readers who want a deeper dive.**

Next Steps and Adjourn

The Council will reconvene on October 31, 2024, to review updated language and targets, and to finalize the document.