

Days and Nights of the Climate Roundtable

By Greg Dennis

Addison County doesn't lack for organizations that are working on climate change. In fact, when CEAC decided to convene the first in a series of "Climate Roundtables" to bring those groups together, there were more of them than could make a five-minute presentation on a two-hour Zoom call.



The first Roundtable, on Feb. 22, was the culmination of several months' planning and personal interactions with leaders around the county. That process resulted in a lively series of summaries of local climate work from 15 different entities — including farmers, activists, nonprofits, academia and government.

We plan future Roundtables to bring other voices into the conversation and expand on what the 60-plus participants in the Zoom call learned that day -- among them forestry and agriculture influencers, Middlebury College President Laurie Patton, and businesses that are implementing renewable energy projects.

A key part of CEAC's work is to convene a diversity of stakeholders so we can work together on building a truly sustainable local economy, while also achieving substantial reductions in greenhouse gas pollution. The first Roundtable made it clear how widely shared this goal is among various interest groups, and how much we all can learn from one another.

Moreover, these initial discussions helped point the way toward a process that will result in the creation of a Climate Action Plan for Addison County. (See the related article in this newsletter.)

CEAC draws its inspiration in part from an organization in Iceland called Vistorka. In the small city of Akureyri, Vistorka coordinates multiple sectors of the local economy, university and government to achieve substantial reductions in the gases that cause climate change. Accordingly, a spokesman from Vistorka was the Roundtable's first five-minute presenter, zooming in from Akureyri.

The other presenters were:

- John Roberts, Champlain Valley Farmers Coalition
- Robert Foster, Foster Brothers Farm
- Todd Hasselbeck, Purpose Energy
- Billy Connelly, Vanguard Renewables
- Freeman Corey, Jr., Green Mountain Power
- Jack Byrne, Middlebury College Dean

- Bill Vitek, Middlebury College New Perennials Program
- Claire Contreras, Sunday Night Environmental Group
- Lindsey Fuentes-George, Town of Middlebury Select Board
- Laura Asermily, Addison County Walk/Bike Council
- Sally Burrell, Bristol Energy Committee
- Lindsey Berk, Addison County Relocalization Network
- Rich Carpenter, Acorn Energy Co-Op
- Brad Long, Efficiency Vermont
- Andrew L'Roe, Addison County Regional Planning Commission

For updates on future climate roundtables, follow this newsletter or ask to join the Google Group listserv by emailing gregdennis814@gmail.com.