



ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE (ECC)

AGENDA

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

8:00 AM

Room 22, Parks & Rec Center

Members:

Paul Roth, Vice Chair

Maureen Nebenzahl

Gordon Leversee

Councilor Bryan Lake

Annu Joshi Bargale

Clair Oursler

Kenneth Swymer Jr., Chair

Lisa Maxfield

Steven Larmon

Tim Murphy

Jake Pipp, Alternate

Chuck Redfern, Alternate

Rowland Russell, Alternate

Staff:

Megan Fortson, Planner

Emily Duseau, Planning Technician

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call**
2. **Approval of Minutes** – April 2, 2025
3. **Adoption of Updated Meeting Schedule** – 4th Wednesday of Each Month from 4:30 pm – 5:30 pm, City Hall 2nd Floor Conference Room
4. **Follow Up Items:**
 - a. **NH DOE** – Comment Letter Submitted for Potential Political Subdivision Solar Grant Program
 - b. **Monadnock Earth Fest** – Wrap Up & Take-Aways
5. **Annual Retreat** – Monday, May 12th from 8:00 am – 12:00 pm, Room 22, Keene Rec Center
6. **Work Group Report Outs**
 - a. Community Solar
 - b. Grants, Fundraising, and Partnerships
 - c. Education and Outreach
 - d. Legislative Tracking
 - e. Food Security
7. **New Business**
8. **Next Meeting:** Wednesday, June 25, 2025 at 4:30 pm – City Hall, 2nd Floor Conference Room (*to be confirmed*)

Link to ECC Google Drive Folder:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1O1WIR0fADTNijRt13v3DU7k2FwxXDcGs?usp=sharing>

**City of Keene
New Hampshire**

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 2, 2025

8:00 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Ken Swymer, Chair
Paul Roth, Vice Chair
Councilor Bryan Lake
Steve Larmon
Clair Oursler
Lisa Maxfield
Gordon Leverage
Timothy Murphy
Jake Pipp, Alternate (Voting)
Charles Redfern, Alternate (Voting)
Rowland Russell, Alternate (Voting)

Staff Present:

Megan Fortson, Planner
Emily Duseau, Planning Technician

Members Not Present:

Maureen Nebenzahl
Annu Joshi Bargale

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Swymer called the meeting to order at 8:05 AM and invited Mr. Jake Pipp, Mr. Charles Redfern, and Dr. Rowland Russell to participate as voting members.

2) Approval of Minutes

Chair Swymer welcomed any discussion of the previous meeting's minutes. Mr. Murphy noted a reference on line 78 to the transportation center on "Guilford", which should say "Gilbo." With no other discussion, Councilor Bryan Lake moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion. With all in favor and no opposition, the March 5, 2025, minutes were approved as amended.

3) NH DOE- Request for Comment on Potential Political Subdivision Solar Grant Program

Councilor Bryan Lake stated he did not have all the necessary information and asked for some background on the request for comment.

26 Planning Technician, Emily Duseau, explained that the program will be designed to support
27 subdivisions in New Hampshire and develop solar projects that reduce energy costs and provide
28 long-term community benefits. She stated that she was assuming that since the committee is an
29 expert on programs related to this, the department would be looking to them for comment, if
30 members had suggestions.

31
32 Planner, Megan Fortson, explained that the initiative was prompted by funds received through an
33 Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant. The goal is to establish a more permanent, ongoing
34 funding source to continue the program beyond the initial grant.

35
36 Mr. Murphy, a newer committee member, shared that after reviewing the materials provided by
37 Megan Fortson, he had concerns based on his experience. He pointed out that political
38 subdivisions—like small municipalities, school districts, or water and sewer districts—often vary
39 in resources and staff capacity. His concern is that competitive, point-based funding programs can
40 widen the gap between well-resourced and under-resourced communities, as the former are more
41 likely to succeed. He submitted some feedback.

42
43 Ms. Fortson emphasized that sharing was intended to raise awareness within the committee,
44 suggesting they could consider submitting formal comments or a letter as a group or submit
45 individual feedback. The Chair could also draft a letter and submit it on behalf of the Committee.

46
47 Mr. Redfern acknowledged that Vice Chair Roth had joined the meeting and offered to serve as an
48 alternate. Ms. Fortson said he could remain a voting member since committee member Annu Joshi
49 Bargale was absent.

50
51 Mr. Gordon Leverage noted that the April 18th deadline for submitting written comments is
52 approaching quickly, limiting what the Committee can accomplish beyond the current meeting.
53 Given the length and complexity of the feedback questions, he suggested drafting a general letter
54 of support for the program that also includes Mr. Murphy's concern about equitable access for
55 less-resourced communities. Mr. Murphy acknowledged that responding as a Committee on a short
56 timeline can be challenging and said he's open to submitting individual comments instead.

57
58 Dr. Larmon raised a question about whether this process is routine for the state or something new,
59 noting that if it is a new initiative, it could be a valuable opportunity, especially given local interest
60 in solar energy. He emphasized the importance of Mr. Murphy's point about supporting less-
61 advantaged communities. He questioned how much the committee—and the community—would
62 genuinely benefit from the program and whether that makes their input more or less significant.
63 He invited other Committee members to share their thoughts based on their experience, asking
64 how much attention the Committee should give to this issue. Chair Swymer stated he was unsure
65 how often the committee has written such letters.

66
67 Though this opportunity is new, Ms. Fortson explained that it is common for the Committee to
68 submit letters in response to state requests for feedback. While the Committee would not directly
69 benefit from writing a letter, it could help influence state-level programs that may eventually
70 impact municipalities. She acknowledged the short two-week timeline and clarified that submitting

71 a letter is optional—it can be done by the Chair with staff support if the Committee chooses, or
72 members can submit individual comments instead.

73
74 Chair Swymer expressed that supporting the program aligns with the Committee’s values and
75 priorities. He felt that offering support at the state level would be worthwhile.

76
77 Ms. Fortson asked when the solar workgroup would be meeting and suggested that, since the group
78 focuses on relevant topics, they could be delegated to draft key points for a Committee letter. Mr.
79 Leversee shared that they meet next week and agreed that the workgroup could try to do that.

80
81 Councilor Lake confirmed that writing letters is common for the Committee, noting that they’ve
82 previously sent letters to the City Council, state, and federal government. He clarified that the
83 Committee doesn't need to finalize the exact content before sending it. Given the standard nature
84 of the process, Councilor Lake offered to go ahead and make the motion to write the letter. He
85 moved that the Committee write a letter in support of the solar grant program. Mr. Paul Roth
86 seconded the motion. With all in favor and no opposed, the motion passed.

87
88 Ms. Fortson stated that she and Ms. Duseau would contact the workgroup members independently.
89 She also offered that either she or Ms. Duseau would attend the Teams meeting so that a staff
90 member could be present for support.

91

92 **4) NH DOE- Request for Comment on Renewable Portfolio Standard Program**

93
94 Ms. Duseau explained that the Department of Energy seeks input on this program through
95 stakeholder sessions held via Microsoft Teams. The first session is scheduled for Wednesday,
96 April 23rd at 1:00 PM. She shared this information to encourage anyone interested in the program
97 or providing feedback to attend the meeting.

98

99 **5) Community Power Program Updates**

100
101 Ms. Duseau reported that on March 20th, the City Council approved the Finance, Organization,
102 and Personnel (FOP) Committee’s recommendation to set the 50% renewable energy option as the
103 default for the Community Power Plan. There are two opt-down options: 25% and 35%
104 renewable—and one opt-up option for 100% renewable energy. She also noted that while an adder
105 fee was not included in the current plan, it may be considered an option in the future. City Council
106 voted to give the City Manager the authority to make this determination in the future.

107
108 Councilor Lake provided background on the City Council's decision regarding the Community
109 Power Plan. Initially, the Council unanimously supported the 50% renewable default option, but
110 concerns about cost led to the plan being sent back to the Committee. The final version maintained
111 the four plan options, raised the default from 35% to 50% renewable, and excluded an adder fee
112 as part of this particular set of updates, but gave the City Manager the authority to look into this
113 again in the future. He emphasized that cost concerns were central to the Council's debate. He
114 highlighted the need for clear public communication about available options, especially for those

115 needing lower-cost plans. Lake also noted the importance of public outreach—via Earth Day
116 events, mailers, or radio—to ensure the program’s success.

117
118 Mr. Peter Hansel asked if Councilor Lake knew the time frame for when the contract is expected
119 to be finalized. Councilor Lake responded that the contract timeline remains flexible, and the City
120 Manager will provide updates in the future.

121
122 Ms. Fortson clarified that they do not have any more specific information. She stated that
123 Councilor Lake is correct. City Council and Staff wanted to take care of this process so that, should
124 there be a good opportunity to secure a reasonable rate, the City Manager can strike while the iron
125 is hot.

126
127 Chair Swymer asked whether there had been any discussion or concern about how offering lower
128 renewable energy options might impact the City’s ability to meet its 2030 goal of achieving 100%
129 renewable energy. He acknowledged the importance of having affordable options, but questioned
130 whether this could slow progress toward that goal.

131
132 Councilor Lake responded that concerns about meeting the 2030 100% renewable energy goal
133 were indeed discussed. He emphasized that without action—like setting the default at 50% — the
134 City will not reach that target. Some Councilors questioned whether the 2030 goal is realistic, with
135 at least one suggesting it might need to shift to 2035. Lake acknowledged that while the goal is
136 ambitious, it is not unreasonable to reassess progress midway. However, he noted that this kind of
137 reconsideration could open the door to broader changes and expressed that some Councilors are
138 hesitant about the current pace toward 100% renewable energy.

139
140 Dr. Russell suggested that, based on examples from other cities, one way to support the goal of
141 100% renewable energy is to create a fund—through public contributions or grants—that could
142 subsidize the cost for those who cannot afford it. He did not offer a specific plan, but wanted to
143 put the idea on the record and encourage the Committee to consider developing it further.

144
145 Vice Chair Roth asked about Eversource’s schedule, which he felt would weigh heavily on the
146 rate. Councilor Lake and Mr. Hansel clarified that it is six months apart. Vice Chair Roth then
147 asked what type of term they were discussing with this latest election, to which Mr. Hansel
148 responded that it was 30 months.

149
150 Vice Chair Roth discussed the timing of the City's renewable energy goals concerning the 30-
151 month contract cycle for the Community Power Program. He pointed out that nearly two complete
152 contract cycles are left before 2030, which is essential when considering progress toward the City's
153 100% renewable energy goal. He noted that this timing is relevant to the Committee’s planning
154 and brought it up from an analytical and engineering perspective.

155
156 Councilor Lake explained that after finalizing the current Community Power Plan, the City will
157 have one more contract cycle before the timeline for reaching its 2030 goal of 100% renewable

158 energy will come to an end. He noted that even if the goal were extended to 2035, incremental
159 progress would still require higher steps now—ideally 65% renewable power set as the default
160 during this cycle rather than the selected 50%. While acknowledging the challenge of a significant
161 jump to 100% in the next cycle, he expressed confidence that the City could achieve the goal with
162 continued effort and planning.

163
164 Mr. Hansel pointed out that the future of energy pricing is uncertain, and renewable energy may
165 become more affordable over the next five years. He emphasized that while it is essential to
166 consider energy sources, the actual supplier may differ, making market conditions a key factor.
167 Ultimately, he noted, the City must remain flexible and responsive to changes in the energy market.

168

169 **6) Monadnock Earth Festival- Planning and Preparation**

170
171 Chair Swymer shared that the Earth Festival is scheduled for April 26th and confirmed that the
172 Committee will have a booth there. Councilor Lake confirmed and shared that a small group met
173 earlier to plan logistics and materials. They discussed creating a QR code sheet linking to key
174 resources like the Community Power program and Keene’s Energy Plan to minimize printed
175 materials. Some handouts will still be available for those who prefer paper. Lake also mentioned
176 reviewing past materials from a previous event and confirmed that essentials like a tent, table, and
177 tablecloth are being arranged. Planning is actively underway.

178
179 Ms. Fortson encouraged connecting with she and Emily for Earth Festival planning details. She
180 confirmed that past materials, including a formatted brochure, have been shared and suggested
181 creating postcards with QR codes linking to relevant websites. The City can print these using
182 existing branding templates. Ms. Fortson noted there's extra promotional funding available for the
183 Master Plan project, so they’ll also have a separate tent for it. She mentioned efforts to place both
184 tables next to each other and said logistics are still being finalized. She sees the event as an
185 excellent opportunity for strong City visibility.

186
187 Vice Chair Roth offered that he has tents if they need them. Ms. Fortson said she would work with
188 him on organizing that. Vice Chair Roth brought up the need for a banner or signage to identify
189 the Committee at the Earth Festival, asking where it might be placed—on the table or the tent—
190 and whether resources were available. Ms. Fortson responded that they could design a banner using
191 Canva with the City’s branding kit, but printing it could cost money. She noted they could print
192 something in-house on paper using a plotter, or if a more durable option is preferred, the
193 Committee would need to vote to allocate funds. She also confirmed that the City does not have a
194 standard vinyl banner with the logo, but they want to purchase one.

195
196 Ms. Duseau noted that, currently, only materials for the Master Plan table are available, but if the
197 Committee wants to produce additional items, they could use their budget. Councilor Lake asked
198 how much of the budget remains, and Ms. Fortson estimated around \$250. She added that there
199 likely won’t be any other expenses for the remainder of the fiscal year, which is ending soon.

200

201 Dr. Russell suggested that if there will be three City-related tables at the Earth Festival—such as
202 Energy and Climate, the Bike Path Committee, and the Master Plan—they should be grouped to
203 create a unified, City-focused presence. He also mentioned that the Bike Path Committee
204 sometimes collaborates with Pathways for Keene, which could be included in the cluster to
205 strengthen the City's visibility and shared mission.

206
207 Mr. Redfern asked if a table had been reserved. Ms. Fortson and Councilor Lake discussed the
208 logistics for reserving space at the Earth Festival. Ms. Fortson mentioned that the Community
209 Development Department signed up the day before and requested a spot near the ECC, hoping to
210 cluster City tables together. Councilor Lake confirmed he had checked on the reservation, but had
211 not submitted it.

212
213 Ms. Fortson added that their department will order a banner. To create a cohesive City presence,
214 she suggested placing the Energy and Climate Committee on one side and the Bike Path
215 Committee on the other. To help differentiate the groups, she proposed using posters on easels and
216 printing large-format materials with the City's plotter. She also noted that if the Committee wants
217 to pursue a banner, they would need to act quickly due to time constraints.

218
219 Mr. Pipp emphasized the need for a clear, immediate solution for Earth Day signage to help
220 identify the Energy and Climate Committee specifically, rather than just the City of Keene. He
221 suggested a more specific banner would help distinguish the committee from others. Given the
222 available budget funds and the fact that the Committee tables at multiple events throughout the
223 year, he recommended investing in a permanent banner to improve visibility and avoid repeating
224 the same issue at future events.

225
226 Mr. Redfern suggested that the Bicycle Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee (BPPAC), which
227 usually shares a table with Pathways for Keene at Earth Day, should instead have its table
228 alongside other City committees to strengthen the City's presence. Given the tight timeline,
229 BPPAC's next meeting is only a week away—he recommended that City Staff, with the Chair's
230 approval, reach out to BPPAC to encourage them to plan their table and banner. Dr. Russell
231 mentioned that BPPAC has been considering purchasing a banner and has proposed coordinating
232 with other committees to get a better deal if multiple banners are ordered.

233
234 Councilor Lake supported purchasing event materials, noting that the Committee's budget will be
235 reset in the upcoming fiscal year. With that in mind, he motioned for the Committee to expend up
236 to the remainder of the budget on event planning materials. Dr. Larmon seconded his motion. With
237 all in favor and no opposed, the motion passed.

238
239 Mrs. Lisa Maxfield reminded the group that this was their last meeting before Earth Day and
240 emphasized the need for volunteers to staff the booth. She encouraged everyone to take a one-hour
241 shift, noting it's an excellent opportunity to connect with fellow Committee members and share
242 information about their work with the community.

243

244 Chair Swymer asked if there was an electronic signup sheet for people to sign up. The group agreed
245 to create one with times included for setup and breakdown. Councilor Lake offered to send it out
246 sometime before the end of the day.

247
248 Ms. Fortson asked Chair Swymer to clarify whether the committee wanted the new banner ready
249 in time for Earth Fest or if it was for general future use. Chair Swymer confirmed that having it
250 prepared for Earth Fest would be ideal. Ms. Fortson explained they usually design banners in
251 Canva and use vendors like Gem Graphics or Curry Copy, depending on cost. Given the tight
252 timeline, she asked if staff could be delegated to handle the design, and Chair Swymer agreed,
253 saying it made the most sense. Ms. Fortson confirmed the banner would feature specific city
254 branding and be labeled for the Energy and Climate Committee, to be stored with the committee's
255 materials.

256
257 Dr. Russell shared that the Bicycle Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee (BPPAC) is considering
258 designing its own graphics or logo to represent the group, with an update expected at their next
259 meeting. He suggested that if anyone in the Energy and Climate Committee had a quick idea for a
260 similar graphic, they could share it with the City for potential use in branding. Ms. Maxfield asked
261 if City Committees could create their logos, and Dr. Russell clarified that it would just be a graphic
262 to represent the Committee's function, not an official City logo. Ms. Fortson added that it would
263 need to be run through communications and marketing for the final stamp of approval.

264
265 Mr. Redfern emphasized the importance of coordinating banner efforts between the Energy and
266 Climate Committee and the Bicycle Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee (BPPAC), noting that
267 BPPAC had planned to have a banner last year, but it never materialized. He encouraged aligning
268 branding while maintaining clear distinctions between the committees. Dr. Russell agreed and said
269 he would contact the BPPAC Chair, Sam Jackson, to share design ideas with Mr. Will
270 Schoefmann, the staff liaison. Ms. Fortson confirmed she would coordinate with Mr. Schoefmann
271 in the effort.

272

273 **7) Annual Retreat**

274
275 The committee reviewed potential retreat dates, initially considering three options in April and
276 May. Members discussed whether previous retreats were two or three hours long, recalling they
277 had been longer and often ran out of time. They agreed that a four-hour retreat would be more
278 effective.

279
280 The retreat's key goals include reviewing the current work groups' status and identifying the
281 committee's top three priorities. Dr. Russell suggested that if the retreat is extended to four hours,
282 a new scheduling poll should be conducted, as his availability would change—and others likely
283 feel the same.

284

285 Given the upcoming Earth Fest event, the group agreed to focus on scheduling the retreat for May
286 to allow more planning time. There was also mention of potentially inviting a guest speaker, as
287 done in past retreats, with the committee coordinating ideas and logistics.

288
289 Mr. Murphy suggested adding a discussion about the city's Hazard Mitigation Plan update to the
290 agenda for the next meeting. Ms. Fortson agreed, noting it's a timely and relevant topic with
291 significant overlap with the Committee's work. She said it's also easier to coordinate since City
292 Staff—specifically Mike Hagan (Plans Examiner & Floodplain Manager) and Kurt Blomquist
293 (Emergency Management Director)—could present. The Committee supported the idea. They
294 agreed to revisit retreat scheduling and speaker planning at the next meeting and address board-
295 related items.

296
297 **8) Potential Meeting Days and Times**

298
299 Chair Swymer and Ms. Duseau discussed the recent surveys sent to Committee members regarding
300 retreat dates and meeting times. Ms. Duseau clarified that there were seven responses for the retreat
301 survey and six for the meeting time survey. Chair Swymer mentioned that the current meeting time
302 is difficult for him due to other commitments, but acknowledged it's still manageable. He opened
303 the discussion to hear thoughts from other members.

304
305 Mrs. Maxfield asked about the survey results, and Ms. Duseau explained that they had reviewed
306 the responses and identified a few of the most popular options. She noted that since most
307 committee members were present, they hoped to choose a final option during the meeting.

308
309 Based on the survey results, Chair Swymer listed the potential new meeting time options:
310 Wednesdays or Thursdays, from 8–9 AM or 4:30–5:30 PM. He said afternoons are generally easier
311 for him, and Mrs. Maxfield agreed, expressing her preference for afternoon meetings. They opened
312 the discussion for other members to weigh in.

313
314 Dr. Russell shared that his preference would be the opposite, as Antioch is on West Coast time,
315 resulting in meetings until 5:30 or 6 p.m. He also has BPPAC on the second Wednesday of the
316 month from 8-9 a.m. Mr. Redfern added that he is also on the BPPAC committee.

317
318 Chair Swymer called for a raise-of-hands vote to determine whether the committee preferred
319 morning or afternoon meeting times. Five members voted for morning and four for afternoon,
320 showing a slight preference for morning meetings. Chair Swymer acknowledged the close split
321 and noted that either option could work for him.

322
323 Mr. Murphy noted that while some members, like himself, prefer morning meetings, it might be a
324 challenge for others. He emphasized the importance of accommodating Chair Swymer's schedule,
325 expressing concern that choosing mornings shouldn't come at the cost of excluding the chair. Chair
326 Swymer responded that morning meetings are often difficult for him due to his work schedule.

327

328 Ms. Duseau added that the discussion about meeting times also considers potential future
329 committee members. Like the current 8:00 AM slot, early morning meetings may exclude
330 individuals with work schedule conflicts. The goal is to make meetings more accessible and
331 inclusive for a broader range of participants moving forward.

332

333 Dr. Russell shared that he has a standing Thursday afternoon meeting, which would prevent him
334 from attending committee meetings at that time. He noted he is available on Wednesday
335 afternoons, making that the better option for his schedule.

336

337 Mr. Pipp asked about preferences for specific weeks of the month for Wednesday meetings. Dr.
338 Russell noted he's unavailable on the first and second Wednesdays, but is generally free on the
339 third and fourth. Mrs. Maxfield agreed that afternoons work better for her due to work obligations,
340 but staying fully present can still be challenging. They decided choosing a time with fewer conflicts
341 would be ideal and leaned toward holding meetings on the fourth Wednesday afternoon, rather
342 than the last, to avoid occasional fifth-week scheduling issues.

343

344 Chair Swymer expressed support for afternoon meetings, noting they may be more accessible for
345 current and future members, especially those with typical work hours or school drop-off
346 responsibilities. He agreed with the earlier point about avoiding barriers to participation and
347 concluded that Wednesday afternoons are likely the best option for the group.

348

349 The group discussed finalizing the new meeting schedule. They agreed to hold meetings on the
350 fourth Wednesday of each month from 4:30 to 5:30 PM and will investigate securing space at City
351 Hall. A draft meeting schedule will be presented at the next meeting for adoption. While there was
352 a brief discussion about considering other weekdays, the group decided to stick with Wednesday
353 based on survey responses.

354

355 **9) Annual Reports for Boards and Commissions**

356

357 Chair Swymer, Ms. Duseau, and Ms. Fortson discussed the upcoming annual committee report
358 due July 1st. While the report is technically optional, the Committee intends to provide City
359 Council with an update. Ms. Fortson explained that the format is flexible; it can be a brief written
360 document or a formal presentation to a Council committee. The decision on the format will be up
361 to the Committee. They agreed it would be best to revisit this after Earth Fest and during the
362 upcoming retreat, where it could be included as a discussion item.

363

364 Dr. Larmon asked how the Committee's annual report would be used and whether it served a
365 purpose beyond providing information. Ms. Fortson explained that the report is intended strictly
366 for informational purposes, primarily to update the City Council on the Committee's activities and
367 plans. She noted that, due to the large number of City Committees, councilors often request updates
368 like this to stay informed. The report is not intended for public distribution or resident engagement,
369 but will be especially timely following the upcoming retreat.

370

371 Dr. Russell suggested that in the future, once the new Master Plan is approved, each work group
372 should align its work and report with the plan, highlighting how their efforts support its goals. This
373 would serve to track progress on the plan over time. Ms. Fortson agreed and proposed discussing
374 the Master Plan at the retreat, mainly focusing on the environmental pillar relevant to the Energy
375 and Climate Committee. Chair Swymer supported the idea, agreeing it should be an early focus of
376 the retreat.

377
378 Mr. Hansel emphasized the importance of including metrics in the Committee’s report to track the
379 City's progress toward its 100% renewable energy goal. He noted that having clear, consistent
380 metrics reported annually to the City Council is essential for understanding where the City stands
381 and how it’s advancing toward its objectives. He strongly advocated making this a regular part of
382 the Committee’s reporting process.

383
384 **10) Work Group Report Outs**

385
386 **A) Community Solar**

387
388 Mr. Leverage reported that the Solar Workgroup met on March 12th and plans to meet again next
389 week to review the proposed funding and provide feedback on the Solar Subdivision Program’s
390 request for comments from the state. He shared that past discussions have been primarily
391 informational and noted that the workgroup’s primary focus—identifying solar sites—has
392 plateaued. As a result, they are looking for a new direction. He suggested that the upcoming retreat
393 could be a valuable opportunity to explore future goals for the solar workgroup. While the idea of
394 a speaker was considered, he emphasized the importance of reserving time in the retreat agenda
395 for Committee discussion and input on the next steps.

396
397 **B) Grants, Fundraising, and Partnerships**

398
399 Mr. Redfern brought up the topic of grants and funding, noting he had been away and was unsure
400 of the status of the grant workgroup or its members, especially with the new calendar year. The
401 group acknowledged that there have been many changes and agreed that the upcoming retreat
402 would be a good time to reevaluate the workgroups, clarify membership, and potentially set new
403 goals. Lisa Maxfield added that the retreat might also be an opportunity to shift the Committee’s
404 overall focus and restructure the workgroups as needed.

405
406 **C) Education and Outreach**

407
408 Vice Chair Roth shared that Earth Day has been their primary focus.

409
410 **D) Legislative Tracking**

411
412 Councilor Lake shared that his focus was the Community Power Program.

413

414 **E) Food Security**

415

416 Dr. Russell provided an update on the situation with the community garden, sharing that the City
417 sold the land to Cedarcrest so that they can construct a solar array, meaning gardening on the
418 Monadnock View Cemetery site will not continue until 2026. Gardeners were not initially
419 informed, but later mobilized and spoke at the Planning Board meeting, which, while too late to
420 change the decision, raised awareness within the City. As a result, a small portion of the land—
421 about a tenth the size of the original garden space—will be preserved for limited gardening and
422 relocating some perennials and pollinator plants.

423

424 Efforts are underway to find alternative gardening sites for the 2025 season, and the gardening
425 community has grown stronger through this challenge. Dr. Russell noted that while the situation
426 is difficult, it presents opportunities to build new partnerships and focus more on long-term
427 solutions for food security, including supporting home gardening. The discussion closed with the
428 recognition that this experience underscores the importance of building strong community
429 relationships that extend beyond committee work.

430

431 **11) New Business**

432

433 Dr. Russell emphasized the importance of the City sharing relevant information with the Energy
434 and Climate Committee, noting that they could have planned better if the group had known about
435 the sale of the community garden land. He also reminded the group that, for the upcoming retreat,
436 there has been discussion about broadening the food security workgroup’s focus beyond food
437 security to include broader climate impacts—such as flooding—to better align with the
438 Committee’s mission. Vice Chair Roth noted that the upcoming hazard mitigation discussion
439 would align well with this expanded focus.

440

441 Councilor Lake shared new business about Eversource’s Free Tree Program, encouraging
442 members to look it up online. However, Mr. Hansel noted the program had already closed, due to
443 high demand. He added that the City of Keene plans to plant 40 trees this spring with help from
444 the Rotary Club.

445

446 Ms. Duseau announced a Red Pine Scale Walk and talk event at Wheelock Park on April 6th at
447 1:00 PM and encouraged anyone interested to attend. She will forward the information in case
448 some members missed it.

449

450 **12) Adjournment**

451

452 With no further business, Chair Swymer adjourned the meeting at 9:11 AM.

453

454 Respectfully submitted by,
455 Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

456

457 Reviewed and edited by,
458 Megan Fortson, Planner



Energy & Climate Committee

2025 Meeting Schedule – AMENDED*

****Starting in June 2025, meetings will generally be held on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 4:30 pm in City Hall 2nd Floor Conference Room.*** Meeting dates, times, and location are subject to change.

Wednesday, January 8th

Wednesday, February 5th

Wednesday, March 5th

Wednesday, April 2nd

Wednesday, May 7th

Wednesday, June 25th

Wednesday, July 23rd

Wednesday, August 27th

Wednesday, September 24th

Wednesday, October 22nd

Monday, November 24th

Monday, December 22nd



April 18, 2025

NH Department of Energy - Division of Policy & Programs
c/o: Ms. Emily Tomasi
Walker Building, Suite 10
21 S. Fruit St, Concord, NH 03301
Emily.J.Tomasdi@energy.nh.gov

RE: Request for Public Comment – Political Subdivision Solar Grant Program

Dear Ms. Tomasi,

The City of Keene Energy & Climate Committee Solar Work Group has reviewed the proposed Political Subdivision Solar Grant Program and formulated a series of recommendations, which are included below for your consideration.

Definitions: Definitions used should be broad. It would be worthwhile to include Planning Commissions and to allow for entities within a category to be combined. For example, the ability for two or more towns to submit a single proposal.

Comments on Design Elements:

1. If there are any size caps, allowing for larger solar development would be better.
2. Prioritize disadvantaged communities.
3. Add additional criteria related to the prioritization of disadvantaged communities. Sources of data may include the Northern Border Regional Commission, the NH Fiscal Policy Institute, the NH Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs, and NH Regional Planning Commissions.
4. Implement a tiered grant funding structure. The proposed tier amounts seem overly modest and the large overlap in tier amounts is puzzling.
5. Tiers – Please see above comments.
6. Eligibility requirements - While the direct ownership criterion may prove to be limiting, it would seem to assure direct benefit to the Political Subdivision.
7. No comment.
8. No comment.
9. No comment.
10. Continuous improvement through sharing case studies of successful programs would be helpful.
11. Technical assistance and education – There is concern that the assistance focus for smaller and more rural entities that often lack resources and expertise to implement

successful grants of this type, furthering divisions between the “haves” and the “have nots.” These smaller entities will need an injection of technical expertise, financial planning, group facilitation, grant writing expertise, etc.

12. No comment.

Timing:

1. Time frame release of RFP – Please see comment below.
2. Time frame REP Open Period - Entity capacity limitations often translate into the need for more time. See “haves” and “have nots” above.

In addition to these comments, we’ve also attached a feedback letter from one of our members, Tim Murphy, who served as the Executive Director of Southwest Region Planning Commission in Keene for almost 30 years. This letter was already formally submitted, but provides additional context for our stated points. Please, feel free to reach out with any questions that you may have.

Thank you,



Kenneth Swymer, Jr.
Energy & Climate Committee Chair

City of Keene
3 Washington St
Keene, NH 03431

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COMPETITIVE RATES. CLEANER ENERGY.

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What is Keene Community Power?

Keene Community Power is a **City-operated group purchasing program** that pools the electric use of **residents and businesses** in order to provide **cleaner electricity** options in addition to **competitively priced electricity options**. The City Council approved the launch of this program in November 2022 and recently updated it in **March 2025** with new program options.

CURRENT RATES *(in effect through December 31, 2025)*

	Eversource Default Service	Keene Basic	Keene Local Green (Default)	Keene 50% Local Green	Keene 100% Local Green
Total Renewable Energy	23%	23%	33%	50%	100%
Rate (cents/kwh)	12.6 (Aug. 2023)	11.1	11.47	12.05	13.9

PROGRAM UPDATES *(anticipated to begin in Dec. 2025 - term length TBD)*

	Eversource Default Service	Keene Basic	Keene Local Green	Keene 50% Local Green (Default)	Keene 100% Local Green
Total Renewable Energy	25%	25%	35%	50%	100%
Rate (cents/kwh)	8.93 (Feb. 2025)	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Solar Workgroup

Online Meeting of 04/09/2025, 12:00-1:00 PM

Attending: Peter Hansel, Steve Larmon, Gordon Leverage

Informational Meeting: No actions recommended.

Topics Discussed:

The meeting agenda was to review the Request for Comments document for the NH Political Subdivision Solar Grant Program and provide suggestions for inclusion in an Energy and Climate Committee (ECC) letter of support which is due April 18, 2025.

ECC member Tim Murphy submitted his comments (see attached pdf) which were discussed and largely adopted by our Working Group. What follows is a summary of our discussion and suggestions.

Definitions: Recommend that definitions should be broad, that Planning Commissions and higher education entities might be added and that entities within a category might be combined, for example, two or more towns might submit a single proposal.

Design Elements:

1. Size caps. If any cap, larger would be better.
2. Priority for disadvantaged communities. Yes
3. Additional criteria for priority of disadvantaged communities. Sources of data might include those of The Northern Border Regional Commission, the NH Fiscal Policy Institute, the NH Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs, and NH Regional Planning Commissions.
4. Tiered grant funding structure. The proposed tier amounts seem overly modest and the large overlap in Tier amounts is puzzling.
5. Tiers. See above.
6. Eligibility requirements. While the direct ownership criterion may prove to be limiting, it would seem to assure direct benefit to the Political Subdivision.
7. No comment.
8. No comment.
9. No comment.
10. Continuous improvement through sharing case studies of successful programs.

11. Technical assistance and education. Concern that assistance focus of smaller and more rural entities that often lack resources and expertise for successful grants of this type, furthering divisions between the “haves” and the “have nots.” These smaller entities will need an injection of technical expertise, finance planning, group facilitation, grant writing expertise, etc.

12. No comment.

Timing:

1. Time frame release of RFP. See below.
2. Time frame REP Open Period. Entity capacity limitation often translate into the need for more time. See “haves” and “have nots” above.

Agenda Item 2. Future direction of the Solar Workgroup. We agreed that futures of all Workgroups will be considered at the EDD retreat in May.

For the Solar Workgroup: Gordon Lerversee