

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

8:00 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Kenneth Swymer, Chair
Paul Roth, Vice Chair
Councilor Bryan Lake
Maureen Nebenzahl
Clair Oursler
Gordon Leversee
Timothy Murphy
Jake Pipp, Alternate
Charles Redfern, Alternate
Rowland Russell, Alternate

Staff Present:

Megan Fortson, Planner
Emily Duseau, Planning Technician

Members Not Present:

Steve Larmon
Lisa Maxfield
Annu Joshi Bargale

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Swymer called the meeting to order at 8:08 AM. Upon completion of the roll call, Chair Swymer invited the three attending alternates to serve as voting members.

2) Approval of Minutes – April 2, 2025

Dr. Gordon Leversee noted a change on page 11, specifically in the last line, where “*EDD*” needed to be changed to “*ECC*.” Dr. Rowland Russell pointed out that the transition was off between the Food Security Work Group report out and the “*New Business*” section. The first paragraph of “*New Business*” included comments he made about the Food Security Work Group, which he suggested should be corrected.

Pending those changes, Mr. Tim Murphy moved to approve the minutes from April 2. Councilor Bryan Lake seconded his motion. With all in favor and none opposed, the motion to approve the minutes from April 2, 2025, was approved.

3) Adoption of Updated Meeting Schedule

Chair Swymer highlighted the changes to the meeting schedule, noting the new time of 4:30 PM to 5:30 PM and the location change to the City Hall 2nd Floor Conference Room. He noted that the new schedule would take effect as of the next meeting on June 25, 2025. Mr. Jake Pipp moved to approve the new meeting schedule, which Councilor Bryan Lake seconded. With all in favor and no opposition, the amended meeting schedule was approved and adopted.

4) Follow Up Items:

A) NH DOE

Chair Swymer invited questions and comments, to which there were none.

B) Monadnock Earth Festival

He expressed his gratitude to Ms. Mari Brunner and Ms. Megan Fortson, commending their efforts in organizing the event. Ms. Fortson recognized Councilor Tobin's efforts in helping to set up for the event.

Chair Swymer thought that the booths were awesome and felt they had a good turnout given the weather. Vice Chair Roth commented that the wildflowers were "awesome" and added that the bubble machine was also fun. Chair Swymer seconded the comment about the bubble machine, adding that it brought a lot of people into the tent.

Chair Swymer shared that most of the questions he received from attendees were around community power, which was not surprising. He welcomed others to share their takeaways from the event. Councilor Bryan Lake expressed additional thanks to Ms. Fortson and Ms. Brunner for their help with both preparing for and attending the event. Out of all of the ECC events he has been to, he felt this one had the best tabling set up and felt very professional. Vice Chair Roth believed that positioning the Energy & Climate Committee table next to the Bicycle Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee's table was beneficial to both groups. Chair Swymer recognized Mr. Bruce Norland, who shared that fifteen electric vehicles were part of the event.

Ms. Fortson shared that they will have a tablecloth for the Committee before the end of the fiscal year. The ordering process had proved to be more difficult than anticipated, but she stated that as soon as they receive it, she will bring it to the following meeting.

Councilor Bryan Lake noted that the Committee had allocated the rest of their remaining balance towards the tablecloth and wondered how much, if any, remained in their balance. Ms. Fortson responded that they do not know as of yet. They are working with the Communications Department to finalize the tablecloth design, which has been challenging due to the Department's current limited staffing and significant workload. She offered to share the information with the Committee

as soon as they have a better idea of where it stands. Councilor Bryan Lake felt that having knowledge of the amount and expenditures for June would help prepare the annual report to Council in July.

5) Annual Retreat – Monday, May 12, from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM, Room 22, Keene Recreation Center

It was asked if there would be a remote option. Ms. Fortson explained that it will be considered a publicly noticed meeting, and a quorum of members physically present is required to hold the retreat. Mr. Pipp stated that he wished he could attend in person, but is unable, and wondered if Zoom participation is possible. Ms. Fortson said they could set up a Microsoft Teams Meeting for Mr. Pipp to participate. Mrs. Maureen Nebenzahl noted that she will be in Mexico and will therefore be unable to attend in person.

Mr. Murphy asked if there were any questions about the meeting quorum and inquired whether they should conduct a poll of the membership to determine if they will meet quorum. Ms. Fortson supported the idea. Chair Swymer, Vice Chair Roth, Councilor Lake, Mr. Murphy, Dr. Russell, and Mr. Claire Oursler all raised their hands, showing their intent to attend the retreat. Dr. Leversee stated he plans to attend, but will be about half an hour late. With at least six members in attendance, there would be the necessary quorum.

6) Work Group Report Outs

A) Community Solar

Dr. Leversee shared that the community solar group met on the 9th and submitted some feedback for the NH Department of Energy grant proposal.

B) Grants, Fundraising, and Partnerships

Mr. Charles Redfern said they require volunteers for the workgroup. He encouraged any interested individuals to contact him before the meeting concluded. Chair Swymer reminded Mr. Redfern that the work groups will be changing in another week or so and suggested holding off on recruitment. Mr. Murphy inquired whether workgroup membership would be a topic of discussion at the retreat. Chair Swymer and Councilor Lake confirmed.

C) Education and Outreach

No Updates.

D) Legislative Tracking

Councilor Lake felt it would be beneficial to discuss the workgroup's status during the retreat, including whether there was support for its continuation and, if so, what its future direction would

be. He felt they got plenty of updates from staff via emails from Clean Energy NH regarding what is coming through the state, and thought that they could do what the workgroup was doing, but at a faster rate.

Mrs. Nebenzahl shared that her son is on the Board of Directors for AmeriCorps Seattle. She just heard on the news that the AmeriCorps in New Hampshire is losing its funding. She wondered if that was something that the legislative workgroup could investigate. Dr. Russell explained that they had investigated AmeriCorps as a potential funding source for the Sustainability Coordinator role previously and offered to discuss this with her later.

Mr. Pipp asked if an agenda was available for the retreat. Ms. Fortson said that although it has not yet been finalized, they intend to do so and send it out by the end of tomorrow.

E) Food Security

Dr. Russell shared several updates at the ECC meeting. The city has allocated 4,800 square feet, or 12 plots, to the new garden site. To begin transitioning, two volunteer work parties are scheduled for the upcoming weekend. The first event will take place on Saturday and will focus on removing infrastructure from the old garden plots and laying out the new plots. The second will be held on Sunday from 12:00 PM to 3:00 PM, primarily for transplanting hedgerows and perennial plants. Volunteers are welcome, and those interested can contact Dr. Russell for directions and a map, as the new site is located at the back end of the cemetery. All the old plots must be cleared by June 20.

Additionally, Dr. Russell announced a meeting this Friday from 2:30 PM to 3:30 PM at City Hall, organized by Mari Bruner, to discuss disaster mitigation and food security planning with representatives from the Community Kitchen and other stakeholders. Anyone interested in attending can contact him for details.

On Monday, the Food Systems Group, of which Dr. Russell is a member, is co-sponsoring a workshop titled "*Food Stories*," focusing on interactive writing and storytelling around food, memory, and identity. The event will be held from 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM at the Hannah Grimes Center.

Finally, Dr. Russell suggested broadening the current food security workgroup to include planning around climate impacts, emphasizing that food issues are increasingly connected to larger environmental challenges, and looked forward to discussing it at the retreat.

7) New Business

Chair Swymer asked if there was any new business. Mr. Redfern inquired whether non-committee members were permitted to serve on working groups, to which Chair Swymer confirmed they

could. Vice Chair Roth confirmed the maximum number of committee members was five, as six would constitute a quorum.

8) **Next Meeting:** Wednesday, June 25, 2025, at 4:30 PM – City Hall, 2nd Floor Conference Room *(to be confirmed)*

9) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Swymer adjourned the meeting at 8:25 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Megan Fortson, Planner