

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, June 25, 2025**

**4:30 PM**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Paul Roth, Vice Chair  
Councilor Bryan Lake  
Maureen Nebenzahl  
Steve Larmon  
Clair Oursler  
Lisa Maxfield  
Gordon Leversee  
Timothy Murphy  
Jake Pipp, Alternate (Remote)  
Rowland Russell, Alternate

**Staff Present:**

Megan Fortson, Planner

**Members Not Present:**

Kenneth Swymer, Chair  
Annu Joshi Bargale  
Charles Redfern, Alternate

**1) Call to Order and Roll Call**

Vice Chair Roth called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. Roll call was performed. Ms. Catherine Koning was in attendance. She noted that she has not yet been confirmed as a member by the City Council and is just attending as a member of the public for today. Mr. Matthew Boulton was also in attendance and shared that he has applied to be a member, but his application is still pending. Mr. Jake Pipp joined the meeting remotely via Teams. Ms. Megan Fortson noted that there were two open regular member positions on the committee and suggested promoting Mr. Pipp and Dr. Rowland Russell to voting status for this meeting. She also reminded members to state their names before speaking, as the minute taker has had difficulty identifying speakers on the recording due to limited visibility from the camera setup.

**2) Approval of Minutes**

Vice Chair Roth welcomed any motions to approve the minutes. Councilor Bryan Lake moved to approve the minutes of the May 7 and May 12 meetings. Dr. Steve Larmon seconded Councilor Lake's motion. A roll call of votes was performed, and with all in favor, the motion to approve passed.

### **3) Adoption of Updated Rules of Procedure**

Ms. Fortson explained that the updated rules of procedure clarify the committee's process for allowing for remote meeting participation. Specifically, the Chair must approve any remote attendance, which should only occur due to exceptional circumstances, such as illness or travel. Remote participation is not intended to be a regular practice. A motion and vote are required to approve this clarification.

Mr. Tim Murphy asked if this had been shared previously. Vice Chair Roth explained that a previous version had been shared, but this specific redline version is new, created to accommodate changes. Mr. Murphy noted that the committee appears to be moving toward taking action on the Rules of Procedure. As a new member, he reviewed the entire document, not just the amendments. He pointed out two concerns: first, that the amended version should be presented at a meeting before any action is taken, and second, that the meeting notice must specifically state that action will be taken on the Rules of Procedure—something he did not see included.

Ms. Forton asked if anyone had any recommended changes that they would like to see in time for the next meeting. Mr. Murphy noted that a comma was missing, but had difficulty finding the exact spot. Ms. Fortson suggested he email the changes to her.

Dr. Larmon requested clarification on the origin of the remote participation policy, inquiring whether concerns about member attendance prompted it. He noted that allowing remote participation can make it easier to reach a quorum, especially during times like the summer when members may be away.

Ms. Fortson clarified that state law requires a physical quorum of members to be present in the meeting space to hold a public meeting. Vice Chair Roth explained that the updated policy aligns with state law and reflects the end of COVID-related emergency orders, which had previously allowed for more flexibility for remote participation.

Mr. Pipp pointed out a typo in item #3 on the second page of the redlined version. He noted that the phrase should read "where they are physically located," instead of "where that are physically located." Mr. Murphy pointed out that the missing comma was in the same sentence. Ms. Forton explained that the updates rules of procedure will be put on the next meeting agenda for formal adoption.

### **4) Membership Updates**

Ms. Fortson explained that due to the departures of Mr. Michael Winograd and Mr. Jude Nuru, there is currently one regular member vacancy on the Committee, which Ms. Koning is expected to fill after being confirmed by the City Council. Another candidate, Mr. Boulton, has also submitted an interest form. She has informed the Mayor's office of the Committee's intention to

move forward with both appointments. Once confirmed, new members will receive an orientation with her, the Planning Technician, and the City Attorney to review the state's right-to-know laws and related information.

#### **5) Eversource Main Streets Event**

Vice Chair Roth introduced the Eversource Main Streets event item, noting it was included in the meeting packet and is a reissue of the committee's previous letter of August 18, 2021. He asked for clarification on the Committee's role regarding the item, specifically whether they are expected to endorse it or take another form of action, as Eversource has reached out.

Ms. Fortson explained that Eversource reached out to the new Community Development Director, Paul Andrus, and the City Manager's office about holding another event similar to the one in 2021. The event would involve a team conducting energy audits over the course of a week. She noted that representatives from Eversource, including Ms. Jessie Destin, Ms. Emily Hazleton, and Mr. Joe Hoebeke were present via Teams to provide more details.

Ms. Emily Hazelton provided an overview of the Eversource Main Streets Initiative, which was previously conducted in Keene in 2021. The program, part of New Hampshire Saves, focuses on bringing energy efficiency services directly to small businesses. It includes outreach, free energy assessments, proposals, and the installation of energy-saving measures by partner contractors. The initiative utilizes targeted marketing (such as town letters, business-specific materials, and customized content for social media) to increase awareness. Participation during the limited event period is encouraged, as it includes enhanced financial incentives to help cover a greater portion of the project cost.

Vice Chair Paul Roth asked if there is a target date for launching the Eversource Main Streets Initiative or if that date is still to be determined. Ms. Hazelton said Eversource is looking for feedback on timing but has ruled out July and August due to summer schedules and small business constraints. September is the earliest they would consider launching, allowing time for outreach and coordination. She noted they are flexible, but prefer a start date after September and welcomed help from the Committee in spreading the word.

Vice Chair Roth recognized Councilor Bryan Lake. Councilor Lake thanked Emily for the information and asked for clarification on Eversource's request to the city, specifically whether they were seeking help with spreading the word about the initiative or if there was a more specific action they were requesting. Ms. Hazelton explained that Eversource's main request is for help spreading the word about the initiative and gathering local insights on the best ways to reach small businesses. While not required, she noted that including a city or Chamber of Commerce logo on marketing materials could help build trust and recognition. The goal is to maximize participation during the limited-time offer by using effective outreach channels identified by local partners.

Mr. Tim Murphy thanked Ms. Hazelton and her team for attending and being receptive to feedback. He requested clarification on what constitutes a “small business” for the program and whether there are specific parameters or criteria that define eligibility. Ms. Hazelton clarified that for the New Hampshire Saves program, a “small business” is defined as a commercial utility customer with an average monthly energy demand of less than 200 kilowatts. Eligibility is based on utility data, not something determined through direct outreach. Qualifying businesses can include restaurants, retail stores, private schools, convenience stores, and some light industrial facilities. If a business exceeds this threshold, they may still qualify for an extensive commercial program. Marketing materials will only be sent to customers who have already been deemed eligible in Eversource’s system.

Mr. Murphy inquired whether the Eversource Main Streets program is being offered in other nearby municipalities, noting that the committee focuses on what is happening specifically in the City of Keene. Ms. Hazelton shared that Keene is the second of three communities where Eversource plans to run the Main Streets Initiative in New Hampshire this year. The first was launched in Manchester in May, and she offered to share updated marketing examples from that campaign to help illustrate how materials have evolved since the 2021 Keene initiative.

Mr. Murphy clarified that he was asking about other municipalities around Keene, not just within the City. He suggested that since the Greater Monadnock Chamber serves the broader region, it could be a valuable partner for outreach to small businesses. He recommended connecting with the Chamber and also suggested using the City of Keene’s website as an additional marketing channel. Ms. Hazelton agreed that partnering with the regional chamber is a great idea. She noted that they’ve encountered similar situations in other municipalities, such as Portsmouth, where regional chambers help extend outreach beyond a single city. She emphasized that Eversource is happy to support and serve any interested businesses, even outside the immediate target area, and encourages all eligible customers to participate.

Dr. Larmon thanked the speaker and asked about the success of the 2021 initiative. He inquired whether the goal is to reach new businesses, revisit the same ones, and how the expected outreach and participation compare to the previous effort. Ms. Hazelton said comparing results from 2021 to now is difficult because the energy efficiency landscape was different during the pandemic. In 2021, the focus was heavily on installing LED lighting, which many businesses may no longer need. However, contractors are now being trained to identify a broader range of energy-saving opportunities tailored to each business type, such as refrigeration for convenience stores or motor systems for manufacturing facilities, making the approach more customized than before.

Vice Chair Paul Roth asked if Eversource could share the timeline it used for the Manchester initiative, including how far in advance it began marketing. He explained that having an example would help the committee understand when they would need to start outreach if they were to launch the program in Keene in September. Ms. Hazelton responded that marketing materials typically need to be developed and customized at least two weeks before the event kickoff to allow time for printing and mailing. For example, in Manchester, adding local images took extra time. Ideally, mailers (postcards or letters) should arrive the week before the event starts. Social media promotion usually begins the Friday before kickoff, with ongoing reminders during the

event. Importantly, businesses have a month after kickoff to sign up and participate, so outreach continues even after the initial launch. Multiple touchpoints are preferred to maximize engagement.

Ms. Maureen Nebenzahl pointed out that the flyer mentioned only two event dates, September 14 and 15, and asked whether, now that the program is no longer operating under COVID-related limitations, more time would be needed beyond just two days. Ms. Hazelton acknowledged the flyer's mention of only two days and clarified that the 2021 event occurred before her time. She stated that a whole week is now the standard duration for the initiative and would be reflected in any new promotional materials.

Dr. Russell asked if the week would include weekends or just weekdays. Ms. Hazelton explained that the primary outreach and canvassing typically occurs Monday through Friday, with contractors going door-to-door to inform businesses and encourage sign-ups for energy assessments. However, if a business prefers a weekend visit, such as on a slower Saturday, Eversource can likely accommodate that with available field staff. Dr. Russell thanked Ms. Hazelton, saying her response was helpful. He noted that when selecting dates for the initiative, the committee should avoid scheduling during festival weekends or busy event days, as businesses may be less available or willing to participate during those times.

Vice Chair Paul Roth recalled that in 2021, there were issues with contractor bandwidth, and audits were completed, but vendors struggled to follow through with the work. He asked what Eversource anticipates in terms of contractor capacity this time and whether they'll be able to serve the Keene community adequately. Ms. Hazelton stated that Eversource has expanded its contractor workforce in New Hampshire since 2021. Previously, there were only three active contractors; however, a recent bid has expanded the roster. The current team is new, motivated, and different from the 2021 group. She said that they are open to addressing any concerns about staffing or capacity with the contractor team during the planning process to ensure confidence in moving forward.

Councilor Lake expressed some hesitation about using the City seal on materials, as it could appear the City is endorsing a specific vendor. He asked whether businesses receiving a free energy assessment through the program are required to use the same contractor for installation, or if they can take the assessment and choose a different vendor to complete the work. Ms. Hazelton explained that the enhanced incentives through the program are typically available only when using Eversource's partner contractor. However, businesses can opt to work with independent local contractors through a separate program called the Customer-Directed Option (CDO). This allows local contractors to manage the project while still accessing New Hampshire Saves incentives, with support from Eversource's lead vendor. Additionally, in some cases, the main contractor may subcontract to a local installer if the customer prefers it. Emily welcomed any local contractors interested in participating. Councilor Lake expressed his support for the initiative, thanked the Eversource team for their efforts, and emphasized his appreciation for bringing the program to the community.

Vice Chair Roth emphasized the value of involving the Chamber of Commerce to help promote the initiative and connect with local talent and vendors. He noted that partnering in this way

would be a win-win for the program and the community. Ms. Hazelton pointed out that involving local labor for installations could help address any concerns about contractor capacity. Tapping into local talent would support the initiative while also easing potential bandwidth issues.

Ms. Lisa Maxfield asked how many site visits they planned to do and how many (approximately) were completed in 2021. Ms. Hazelton responded that, as it was before her time, she did not have those numbers on hand, but offered to report back to this group if that would be helpful. She offered to look up the approximate number of small electric business customers within Keene, and she could then use it to create a goal for them to try and hit.

Mr. Murphy highlighted the value of the program in helping small businesses improve their bottom line. He offered additional outreach suggestions, recommending that Eversource connect with the New Hampshire Small Business Development Center and the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship, both of which may have contact lists or databases to help spread the word. Ms. Hazelton took notes and thanked Mr. Murphy for the ideas.

With no other questions, Vice Chair Roth thanked Ms. Hazelton for her time and insight and said they looked forward to working with her. Ms. Hazelton thanked the committee for having them.

#### **6) Committee Budget Updates**

Ms. Fortson shared that the 2024–2025 committee budget had been expended.

#### **7) Banner & Tablecloth**

Vice Chair Roth announced that the lack of budget was due to the banner they purchased. Ms. Fortson provided a budget update, stating the committee is currently \$9 over budget due to recent purchases of a vertical banner and tablecloth for event use. The Communications and Marketing Director covered the overage. She noted that these materials will help represent the Energy and Climate Committee at events. The new fiscal year begins on July 1, at which point the committee will receive a new \$250 budget.

#### **8) Annual Report to City Council**

Vice Chair Roth introduced the draft of the committee’s annual report to City Council and opened the floor for comments. Mr. Murphy noted that Ms. Nora Travis was listed as being affiliated with Keene State College and asked for clarification on whether that is still accurate. Ms. Fortson shared that she is an adjunct professor at Keene State College. Dr. Russell stated that he had been in touch with people in that department who shared that she is not there now. He suggested that her professional affiliation should be the primary affiliation.

Mr. Murphy observed that a letter was prepared with Vice Chair Paul Roth’s signature instead of the chair’s and asked why. Ms. Fortson informed him that this was because Chair Swymer is currently out of town. Vice Chair Roth noted that the date on the letter is currently blank, as the goal is to submit it to City Council sometime in July, depending on timing. Mr. Murphy

suggested that if the Chair is available, he should sign it, but if not, it is appropriate for the vice chair to do so. He also complimented Vice Chair Roth on doing a great job in his current role.

Councilor Lake asked if the Committee report to City Council includes highlights or a summary of accomplishments from the past year. Ms. Fortson confirmed that it does, noting that the report serves to keep the Council informed about the Committee's work and progress.

Ms. Fortson explained that the Committee's letter will be shared with City Councilors and will serve as their official annual report. Therefore, members are not required to give a verbal presentation, although they are welcome to do so if they choose.

Councilor Lake confirmed that the Committee report will be submitted as an informational item and that most committee chairs are not expected to present their letters in person. However, some, such as the Heritage Commission, may choose to do so. Ms. Fortson asked if there were any additional edits needed for the report beyond those discussed earlier. Ms. Maureen Nebenzahl offered a correction to the description of her professional background.

Ms. Fortson suggested that, with only two minor edits remaining, the Committee could vote to authorize either Chair Swymer or Vice Chair Roth to sign the letter once the changes are made. Vice Chair Roth agreed, and Ms. Fortson stated that a formal motion would be necessary. Councilor Bryan Lake moved to submit the letter with the edits mentioned, as applied by either the Chair or the Vice Chair, as available, before July 1. Ms. Lisa Maxfield seconded. With a unanimous roll-call vote, the motion to submit was approved.

**9) Work Groups - Updates & Discussion from Spring 2025**

- A) Outreach**
- B) Policy**
- C) Resilience**

Councilor Lake offered a brief recap of the annual retreat and updates regarding committee work group restructuring, given the new members present. He explained that the committee decided to consolidate the number of work groups to three topic main areas—Outreach, Policy, and Resilience—to improve focus and participation. No specific members were assigned to the new groups yet, and the discussion was left open for further input and involvement. Councilor Lake offered to participate in or lead any of the groups and encouraged others to share their interests in joining or leading specific areas.

Ms. Maxfield requested brief descriptions of each new work group, specifically seeking clarification on the focus of the "Resilience" group. She noted that "Outreach" was more self-explanatory. Councilor Lake provided an overview of the three new work group areas. Outreach involves planning events and sharing information with the public. Policy focuses on monitoring state and local developments, recommending actions to the City Council, and keeping the community informed about relevant legislation or guidelines, such as those related to electric

vehicles. Resilience encompasses broader, project-based efforts, such as food systems and community solar initiatives, that strengthen local sustainability and infrastructure.

Dr. Russell added that the Resilience group does (and should) focus primarily on climate-related issues, such as hazard mitigation, flooding, and climate-focused planning. While energy projects are part of it, the group should also emphasize broader climate resilience, offering a more purposeful focus than simply being a “miscellaneous” category.

Ms. Koning shared that she and Mr. Boulton coordinate the Keene Clean Energy Team and hope their participation on the Committee will help improve collaboration. She offered the Clean Energy Team as a potential partner for outreach efforts, noting that while it’s a separate and smaller group, it operates in a complementary way.

Vice Chair Roth emphasized that the Committee aims to complement, rather than duplicate, existing efforts by serving as a clearinghouse of information. He sees the Outreach group playing a key role in directing the community to regional resources through the Committee’s website, helping people easily access existing services and information.

Mr. Boulton shared that he and Ms. Koning also serve on the board of the Monadnock Sustainability Hub, which could be another valuable partner for the Committee. He agreed with the idea of avoiding redundancy and emphasized the importance of collaboration and serving as a clearinghouse for regional sustainability efforts.

Mr. Murphy suggested having staff circulate a simple sign-up sheet to gauge initial interest from members in joining the new work groups. Ms. Fortson agreed, noting it does not need to be overly formal, just a basic way to start organizing participation, so long as people respond.

Councilor Lake supported the idea of using a poll to gather initial interest in work group participation. He suggested that if feedback is not received by the next meeting, the Committee may need to follow up with each member directly. He also reminded the group of the five-member maximum for work group meetings to avoid triggering public meeting requirements, noting that guests and non-members can participate without affecting the count.

Dr. Russell asked if alternates count toward the five-member limit in work groups, and Councilor Lake confirmed they do, as they are considered members for quorum purposes. He added that individuals can participate in multiple work groups if space allows. Dr. Russell suggested the interest poll include an option for members to indicate if they are willing to take a leadership role in any of the groups they join.

Mr. Murphy pointed out that the five-member limit for work groups relates to avoiding a quorum, which changes based on Committee size. He clarified that as new members are added, the quorum number may also shift. Ms. Fortson confirmed that with 11 regular member slots, the



quorum is six, which aligns with the Rules of Procedure, which requires one more than half of the members to be present to constitute a quorum.

Councilor Lake clarified that, according to the Rules of Procedure, quorum is based on the total number of eligible member slots (11), not the number of currently appointed members. This means the quorum remains fixed at six, even if some seats are vacant. He concluded that the Committee is covered under this Rule.

Chair Roth emphasized the importance of encouraging non-Committee members to participate in work groups. He noted that broader community involvement is not currently well-advertised, but is essential for maximizing the Committee's impact. He added that engaging more people helps share the workload and strengthens the Committee's efforts.

Ms. Maxfield suggested the Committee define the responsibilities of work group leaders so members can consider the role before volunteering. The group agreed it hasn't been formally established, but should be included in future Committee orientations. Responsibilities discussed included running meetings, taking notes, presenting monthly updates to the full Committee, and coordinating meeting schedules.

#### **10) New Business**

Ms. Koning brought up the date of the upcoming Energy Fair, confirming it will be held on Saturday, September 7. She noted that the Monadnock Sustainability Hub hosts the fair every year and alternates between hosting the event in Keene and Peterborough. She suggested it might be something for the Committee to consider getting involved with.

Dr. Russell provided an update on the community gardens, sharing that all three, Stonewall Farm, Elm Farm, and the cemetery plots, are now operational, although a couple of plots remain available at Stonewall. He noted the significant volunteer effort involved, with hundreds of hours contributed, including by many non-gardeners and a dedicated student from MC<sup>2</sup> who attended every workday. He expressed gratitude for the community support and shared that a fourth garden is in the works for next year. Dr. Russell also mentioned that he is ready to step down from coordinating the gardens.

Under new business, Mr. Murphy shared that he found the City Staff's presentation on the Hazard Mitigation Plan at the recent ECC annual retreat both interesting and relevant to the committee's work. He recommended that the committee stay informed about the plan's progress and any significant updates. Mr. Murphy suggested inviting staff back at an appropriate time to provide an update and allow for discussion so that the Committee can stay aligned with the plan and its developments.

Ms. Fortson responded that she is unsure of the current timeline for the Hazard Mitigation Plan update, as the Emergency Management Director is handling it. However, she offered to look into it and provide an update at the next Committee meeting.

Mr. Murphy clarified that there had been two separate presentations, one on the updates to the flood insurance rate maps and another on the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan updates. He emphasized that both are relevant to the Committee's work. While neither is finalized, he noted that the flood map update follows a federal timeline, while the Hazard Mitigation Plan is locally driven. He stressed the importance of staying informed on both and receiving timeline updates, so the Committee does not lose track of their progress.

Dr. Russell expressed strong support for keeping the Committee engaged with City Staff, noting that regular staff attendance at the Bicycle/Pedestrian Pathway Advisory Committee meetings has been highly beneficial. He emphasized that involving staff helps reinforce collaboration and hopes the Energy & Climate Committee will do the same more often during project planning and discussions.

- 11) **Next Meeting: Wednesday, July 23, 2025, at 4:30 PM- City Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room**
- 12) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Vice Chair Roth adjourned the meeting at 5:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Megan Fortson, Planner