

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 23, 2025

4:30 PM

**2nd Floor Conference Room,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Paul Roth, Vice Chair
Councilor Bryan Lake
Lisa Maxfield
Gordon Leversee
Timothy Murphy
Charles Redfern, Alternate (Voting)
Catherine Koning, Alternate (Remote/Voting)

Staff Present:

Megan Fortson, Planner

Members Not Present:

Kenneth Swymer Jr., Chair
Jake Pipp, Alternate
Maureen Nebenzahl
Steve Larmon
Clair Oursler
Annu Joshi Bargale
Rowland Russell, Alternate

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Vice Chair Roth called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. Roll call was conducted. Vice Chair Roth stated that alternates are voting members today.

2) Approval of Minutes – June 25, 2025

Mr. Leversee made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of June 25, 2025. Councilor Lake seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous roll call vote.

3) Adoption of Updated Rules of Procedure

Vice Chair Roth stated that they had some minor changes last (month) to the Rules of Procedure. He asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

Councilor Lake made a motion to approve the updated Rules of Procedure. Mr. Redfern seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous, roll call vote.

Ms. Fortson stated that in order for the updated Rules of Procedure to become official, they need a quorum of members who are physically here to sign the printed copy of the Rules of Procedure at the end of the meeting. She continued that she will then file the document with the City Clerk's Office.

4) NH Saves Button-Up Weatherization Workshop

Vice Chair Roth stated that the NH Saves Button-Up Weatherization Workshop will be November 6 at 6:00 PM, with the location to be determined.

Ms. Koning stated that the Clean Energy Team put this together, and it is scheduled to be at the Parks & Rec Center. She continued that she hopes the ECC will co-sponsor the Workshop, which would mean the use of the room at the Recreation Center would be free. The Clean Energy Team does not have a budget. The Workshop will be open to the public, and the Clean Energy Team will do all the advertising. If the ECC co-sponsors, the advertising can include the ECC's logo.

Discussion ensued. Mr. Murphy spoke of how the Workshop aligns with the ECC's purview. Ms. Maxfield stated that the ECC has co-sponsored this event in the past.

Ms. Maxfield made a motion for the Energy and Climate Committee to co-sponsor the NH Saves Button-Up Weatherization Workshop. Councilor Lake seconded the motion.

Councilor Lake asked for a quick overview of the Workshop, for the sake of the minutes. Ms. Koning stated that NH Saves will come and explain energy cost savings and talk about insulation, windows, and heat and energy efficiency. She continued that it is well done and informative. They bring in samples of different kinds of insulation. They talk about cost savings and how to join the program by going to the website and putting in your information. It is helpful. The ECC sponsored a workshop like this last year. It was not very well attended, so they hope to do a better job with advertising this time.

Mr. Leversee stated that that is what he remembers from last year, too, and noted that it would be good to have more people this time. He continued by stating that he thinks it would be appropriate for the ECC's Outreach Work group to coordinate with Ms. Koning on a plan for getting the word out. Ms. Koning agreed. Vice Chair Roth stated that (it is relevant to) the Resilience Work group, too.

The motion passed with a unanimous, roll call vote.

5) Eversource Main Streets Event – Next Steps

Vice Chair Roth stated that the meeting minutes say that Eversource was going to give (the City) a timeline for their Main Streets event.

Ms. Fortson stated that she spoke with Eversource earlier this week, and they hope to come to Keene the week of September 8 to 12. She asked if anyone is aware of any events happening that week or the weekend before or after that. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Fortson clarified that Eversource's event will be just during the business days, not the weekend. Vice Chair Roth replied that the ECC had suggested Eversource approach businesses that have downtimes on weekends. He continued that he does not know if they have pursued anything with the Greater Monadnock Collaborative (former Chamber of Commerce).

Discussion ensued about marketing. Ms. Fortson stated that Eversource has the promotional materials ready, but they want to nail down a date. Mr. Redfern asked if Eversource specified what they would be doing with this event. Ms. Fortson replied that Eversource gave a presentation at last month's ECC meeting and explained that they would be coming to Keene and approaching businesses about doing energy audits and giving recommendations to businesses for structural changes they could make to increase energy efficiency. If businesses do the work through the Eversource program, which she is done in conjunction with NH Saves, they can get lower cost work done by using the partner contractors. They wanted feedback from the ECC. Now they want feedback from the ECC on the proposed date.

Peter Hansel, guest, stated that he wanted to give feedback on the last time they had this Eversource Main Streets event. He continued that it was a great success. Many businesses participated and many went on to take advantage of the discounts.

Vice Chair Roth asked if they have received feedback from Manchester regarding how the project went for them in May. Ms. Fortson replied no, they have not provided her with that information. Discussion continued, and Vice Chair Roth shared more information from the conversation at last month's meeting. Mr. Murphy stated that at the June ECC meeting, they discussed this at length – ideas, marketing, and who to work with – and he thinks now this is on today's agenda just to see if ECC members see any conflicts with the September 8 week that Eversource is targeting. He thinks it is a fine week.

Discussion continued, and others agreed that September 8 is a fine week, as long as Eversource has enough time to market the program before then. Ms. Fortson replied that Eversource has a specific timeline they follow for advertising these events. The group agreed that the week of September 8 is good.

Ms. Fortson stated that in preparation for the next meeting she can get some sample materials from Eversource, of what they will be sending out.

6) Annual Report to City Council

Vice Chair Roth stated that Chair Swymer signed the annual report to the City Council. Ms. Fortson replied yes, and that is (all for this agenda item) – she just wanted the ECC to be aware of

it. She continued that the letter is in the agenda packet. Vice Chair Roth asked if anyone had questions or comments.

7) Hazard Mitigation Plan Updates

Ms. Fortson stated that Mr. Murphy had asked for an update on the FEMA maps and the Hazard Mitigation Plan. She continued that there is not an update on the FEMA maps, because that is up to the federal government, but she reached out to Kurt Blomquist, Emergency Management Director, who said they completed their final draft (of the Hazard Mitigation Plan). The Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee reviewed it on June 11 and the City Council adopted it on June 19. Now they are doing a final clean up and will submit it to FEMA and HSEM for review and approval, hopefully by the end of this month.

Mr. Murphy thanked Ms. Fortson and stated that he brought it up because he sees a lot of alignment between that work and the work of the ECC, so it is good for the ECC to understand what is happening. He continued that it sounds like good progress has been made. Discussion ensued, and members noted that the City's work on this is done, and they are waiting on the federal government. Mr. Murphy noted that the Hazard Mitigation Plan requires updating every five years, to stay copacetic with State and Federal guidelines and be eligible for potential funding.

8) Clean Energy New Hampshire Municipal Membership Benefits

Frank Richter from Clean Energy New Hampshire stated that Keene is a municipal member of Clean Energy NH, which is a nonprofit organization in Concord that helps small businesses and municipalities. He continued that the City of Keene pays \$300 a year for a basic membership, which comes with certain benefits. Members of municipal committees can register on Clean Energy NH's website and create a profile, and access all the benefits they offer municipalities. Mr. Richter spoke about the benefits they provide to municipalities, such as local policy tips; cohort trainings on topics such as EV charging and energy audits; a policy newsletter and invitations to the policy calls; policy webinars; and two complimentary tickets to the Local Energy Solutions (LES) conference in Manchester. If anyone has questions, they can let him know.

Ms. Maxfield asked for more information about the municipal membership benefit of "*neutral expertise, technical assistance, and training for energy project execution*," which looks interesting. Mr. Richter replied that if a municipality or school is applying for a grant to do solar projects or energy retrofits of buildings, that is something he helps a lot of towns with. He noted that he also helps customers with navigating direct pay, which is a tax credit municipalities can get for projects. Clean Energy NH can also offer advice if municipalities have questions about doing energy audits, or are seeking something like a list of reputable auditors or reputable installers for solar or EV charging, and they have people who track policies, funding sources, and legislation. Keene's Zoning is in a good position, but if things change, then Clean Energy NH can help.

Mr. Richter stated that an issue coming up in a lot of towns is that they want to put an EV charging station in, but it is treated as a fueling station, so they are changing the Zoning to accommodate that. Clean Energy NH is helping a couple of towns with their master plans to put energy efficiency language in place. Mr. Richter continued that Clean Energy NH also works with small businesses and farms. He spoke more about that work.

Ms. Maxfield stated that she has a follow-up question. She asked if “*Energy benchmarking with a Portfolio Manager*” means Clean Energy NH would help talk them through the process and find a company that would come and do an audit and installation. Mr. Richter replied yes, Clean Energy NH could help introduce them to an energy auditor to at least have a conversation with them. He continued that Clean Energy NH can connect them with certain energy auditors specializing in municipal facilities. They work closely with NH Saves. Clean Energy NH has a list of names to get proposals from or answers to questions.

Mr. Redfern stated that regarding the difference between the minimum membership benefits and the \$500-level benefits, he wonders how long the City of Keene has been at the \$300 level. Ms. Fortson replied that she is not sure, and she is not sure how long the City has had a membership with Clean Energy NH. She could find out. Mr. Redfern replied that he would like to know if the City has ever considered going to the \$500 level due to the potential benefits, such as additional tickets to the LES conference. Discussion ensued.

Councilor Lake stated that the City discussed it a year or two ago and decided they did not need the additional tickets. He continued that they could discuss it again. Ms. Maxfield asked how much a ticket to the LES Conference costs. Mr. Richter replied that he can find out and let them know. Discussion continued about the tickets. Ms. Fortson spoke about how the ECC voted last year to use the ECC budget to purchase two tickets to the conference, and they could consider purchasing additional tickets to this year’s conference as well, if there are members who are interested in going. Mr. Richter stated that he just looked up the answer to Mr. Redfern’s question, and the City has had a membership since 2019, and it has always been at the \$300 level.

Vice Chair Roth stated that Mr. Richter said he works with Zoning for small towns. He asked if he works with Planning Boards for small towns, too. Mr. Richter replied yes, he has met with several Planning Boards. He continued that they recently did a cohort training with 35 towns, a three-month training basically to do what the City of Keene did with permitting and solar-friendly zoning. He walks Planning Boards through this process. Discussion ensued about the Monadnock Resource Alliance, and Planning Boards in smaller towns.

The group thanked Mr. Richter for his presentation.

9) Work Groups – Membership Updates

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

Vice Chair Roth stated that they had a Google Excel sheet for signing up for the work groups, which hopefully people responded to.

Ms. Fortson stated that for the Outreach Work Group, Chair Swymer, Ms. Maxfield, Mr. Leversee, and Ms. Koning are signed up. She continued that the Policy Work Group has Councilor Lake, Ms. Nebenzahl, and Matt Boulton, who will hopefully soon become an ECC member. The Resilience Work Group has Mr. Murphy, Mr. Russell, Mr. Larmon, and Vice Chair Roth. Caroline Sweet is in that group, too, as a member of the public, as well as Peter Hansel. Only one person so far has volunteered to be a leader of a work group, and that is Councilor Lake for the Policy Work Group.

Mr. Redfern stated that he is interested in joining the Outreach Work Group. Ms. Koning stated that if there are too many people in a group and another group needs more members, she is happy to switch. She could be in any of the work groups. Discussion ensued. Ms. Fortson noted that Outreach has five ECC members, which is the maximum number they can have without having a quorum; Resilience has four ECC members and two other members; and Policy has two ECC members and one other member.

Ms. Fortson spoke of the need for work group leaders, who would be responsible for coordinating the work group meetings in between the monthly ECC meetings and reporting-out to the ECC in some way. It could be in a written form or a verbal update, with verbal updates being preferable. To answer an ECC member's question, Ms. Fortson clarified that work groups could meet on Zoom (or Google Meet), but that would be for the work groups to coordinate on their own, without staff support. Discussion ensued about remote meeting options.

Ms. Fortson asked Vice Chair Roth if they should have the work groups coordinate a meeting before the ECC's August meeting, or if they want to circle back to this at the August meeting. Mr. Murphy asked if there is an agenda for the August meeting. Ms. Fortson replied not at this point. Mr. Murphy suggested dedicating a portion of the meeting to breakouts, and having limited agendas, to talk about next steps, leadership, and those sorts of things. Others agreed. Discussion ensued about whether that idea for the August meeting would work, logistically, if three conversations were happening simultaneously.

Ms. Fortson stated that maybe she could figure out a different meeting location. Discussion continued about possible locations, such as Library conference rooms. Vice Chair Roth suggested having the regular ECC meeting and then having the work groups meet right after, so they could keep their regular meeting location. Ms. Koning suggested the work groups meet before the August ECC meeting, on their own, to simplify it. Councilor Lake agreed and stated that it would be logistically difficult to have break-out groups during the ECC meeting while following the Rules of Order and RSA 91-A. He continued that he thinks each work group should coordinate its own meeting between now and the August ECC meeting. Discussion continued.

Councilor Lake stated that work groups could meet in person, but meeting online might be easier. He cautioned people to keep the groups as limited as possible if they start emailing each other, to avoid creating a quorum (and thus being subject to RSA 91-A). Ms. Fortson stated that she will email out the ECC roster, which has everyone's contact information on it, along with the spreadsheet that shows who has signed up for each work group.

Ms. Koning stated that this might be a question for the Outreach Work Group, but she wonders if the ECC wants to have a presence at the Clean Energy Conference at Peterborough in September. Per an ECC member's question about whether a quorum of ECC members would be allowed to attend at once, Councilor Lake clarified that it is not a problem for a quorum of members to be at an event or in a location, if they are not grouped together, discussing ECC business and preventing others from listening. Discussion continued about wanting to have a presence at the conference.

Ms. Fortson stated that the Outreach Work Group could come up with a format for creating promotional materials for the ECC to have at events like that. She continued that the City has a pro account with Canva, which has the City branding, and staff would be happy to help with formatting everything once the ECC has content ideas down. If work groups want to meet in person, she could also help coordinate with reserving a room at the Library or Rec Center.

10) New Business

Mr. Leversee stated that Bill McKibben's new book is coming out, *Here Comes the Sun*. He continued that it is about the global move toward renewable energy, particularly solar. Maybe the ECC could have copies as part of their prizes for things when they have events.

Ms. Koning stated that Bill McKibben's group is putting together another clean energy event on September 21, which could be another opportunity for the ECC's involvement. Others noted two more events: Bill McKibben will be speaking in Peterborough on August 25, and the at the Monadnock Sustainability Hub's Clean Energy Conference a few days before.

11) Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 at 4:30 PM

12) Adjournment

There being no further business, Vice Chair Roth adjourned the meeting at 5:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Megan Fortson, Planner