

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, August 27, 2025

4:30 PM

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

Members Present:

Timothy Murphy, Chair
Paul Roth, Vice Chair
Councilor Bryan Lake
Lisa Maxfield
Annu Joshi Bargale (Remote)
Gordon Leverage
Charles Redfern, Alternate (Voting)
Rowland Russell, Alternate (Voting)
Catherine Koning, Alternate (Voting)

Staff Present:

Megan Fortson, Planner

Members Not Present:

Maureen Nebenzahl
Steve Larmon
Clair Oursler
Jake Pipp, Alternate

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Vice Chair Roth called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM and Ms. Fortson called roll.

A member of the public was present: Carolyn Sweet.

2) Election of New Chair

Ken Swymer, Jr., has resigned, so the Committee proceeded nominating a new Chair until January 2026.

A motion by Mr. Redfern nominating Vice Chair Roth to act as Chair was duly seconded by Dr. Koning. Vice Chair Roth was honored but declined due to his workload.

A motion by Vice Chair Roth nominating Mr. Murphy as Chair was duly seconded by Mr. Redfern. Mr. Murphy was willing to fill the role with Mr. Roth continuing as Vice Chair. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote. Chair Murphy began leading the meeting.

3) Approval of Minutes – July 23, 2025

A motion by Councilor Lake to adopt the July 23, 2025 minutes was duly seconded by Mr. Redfern and the motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

4) Signing Updated Rules of Procedure

Planner, Megan Fortson, passed around the Committee's updated Rules of Procedure for members to sign. It was sufficient for the quorum of members present to sign them. Then, the Rules would go on file with the City Clerk's office and become official. Ms. Fortson would post a copy on the Energy and Climate Committee (ECC) webpage for easy access.

5) Monadnock Clean Energy Fair – Saturday, September 27th from 10:00 AM–2:00 PM at Peterborough Elementary School

Dr. Koning reported on the Monadnock Clean Energy Fair offered through the Monadnock Sustainability Hub. The Hub's Program Manager, Rachel Ranelli, had planned to attend this meeting, but was unable. This is the third year of the Fair, which alternates between Keene and Peterborough, with the Peterborough Renewable Energy Project (PREP) as the co-sponsor. The Fair would be in Peterborough in 2025 and include music, food, kids' games, and tabling by vendors and non-profits in the energy sector.

Dr. Koning discussed whether the ECC should table at the Fair. She noted that the Outreach Work Group (Dr. Koning, Mr. Redfern, and Mr. Leversee) met and discussed that there was another tabling event on the September 21st, so they would need more help from the Committee to table both events. Dr. Koning said she would be at the September 27th event, noting it would be big. She asked if anyone had been before and Vice Chair Roth had. Chair Murphy asked about the previous turnout and Dr. Koning reported 250–300 people, stating there would be broader appeal to families now with music and activities. Discussion ensued about the ECC's goal in attending the 2025 Clean Energy Fair. Chair Murphy asked for an example and Dr. Koning thought a goal of tabling was always to raise awareness and outreach. Ms. Maxfield added that in the past, tabling was used to spread the word about the Community Power Program.

The Committee discussed whether there would be enough people available to table at both the September 21st and September 27th events. Dr. Koning said the Outreach Work Group had a lot of cool ideas, and Mr. Redfern and Dr. Leversee were committed to being at the September 21st event. Ms. Fortson asked for a description of the event on the 21st. Dr. Koning said Bill McKibben started a group called Third Act, which tries to get retirees working on climate change issues and more. So, Beth Caldwell planned an event for the September 21st equinox, called "Sun Day" at the Recreation Center. Dr. Koning acknowledged that the ECC might not have the capacity to table both events. She thought the Monadnock Sustainability Hub and PREP hoped

the ECC would take an active role in co-sponsoring the Fair and advertising, stating the Hub would do most work regarding vendors, the location, etc.

Councilor Lake echoed Ms. Maxfield that when the Monadnock Clean Energy Fair was in Keene, the purpose had been to spread the word about the Community Power Program, especially when actually making the transition. While open to it, he was worried about taking the time to table in Peterborough this year without much to actually discuss with that section of the community. He wondered if the ECC's resources would be better used by having a presence at the Fair in 2026 in Keene. Dr. Koning said that was the Outreach Work Group's same conclusion. The Outreach Work Group suggested having a handout about the Community Power Program available at the 2025 Clean Energy Fair in the ECC's effort toward getting more people to opt-up for 100% renewable energy. Chair Murphy was glad to hear the work group was making progress.

The Committee reached consensus on not tabling at the September 27th, 2025, Monadnock Clean Energy Fair. The ECC would instead table at the September 21st, 2025, Third Act "Sun Day" solstice event at the Recreation Center. Chair Murphy asked if the Monadnock Sustainability Hub would be disappointed and Dr. Koning thought they would be fine, noting her sense that many groups were participating. However, Dr. Koning thought Committee members should try to attend and show support, and others agreed. She confirmed the ECC would not be a co-sponsor, stating the hope is that when the Fair is in Keene, the ECC would co-sponsor. She also confirmed the ECC would not be an official sponsor on September 21st either. Ms. Fortson asked for the event hours on the 21st and Dr. Koning said that she would have to confirm. Ms. Fortson noted City Staff would not be present, so she would need to arrange supplies with Committee members in advance. Ms. Fortson asked the Committee if it wanted to formally motion to table on September 21st and not September 27th, but no motion/vote ensued.

Dr. Leversee asked if there was a way to signify members would be representing Keene when attending the Monadnock Clean Energy Fair (e.g., wearing a badge or t-shirt) to indicate the City's presence when not tabling. Dr. Russell also suggested sharing brochures or business cards when walking around, which he would typically do when taking a break from tabling to network with other organizations. Dr. Koning suggested a 1/2-page handout about the Community Power Program to be placed on the Monadnock Sustainability Hub's table during the event. Ms. Fortson said there was already a Community Power FAQ that could be printed. Dr. Koning said they would need materials for September 21st as well.

The Committee agreed to table on September 21st but not September 27th, although there would be value to individual ECC members' presence there on the 27th to show support (and Dr. Koning would try to hand out flyers).

6) **Eversource Main Streets Event – Updates**

Ms. Fortson reported on Eversource's Main Street Event on September 8th. The City received a draft postcard specifically for this event from Eversource, which Ms. Fortson sent to the City's Communications and Marketing Director for feedback. Ms. Fortson would send that postcard to the ECC before the event so members could share it with their professional and personal networks. Chair Murphy said Eversource would be advertising too.

7) **2025 Local Energy Solutions (LES) Conference – Thursday, September 25 from 9:00 AM–4:00 PM at the Doubletree Center in Manchester**

Ms. Fortson reported that through the City's Clean Energy New Hampshire membership, the ECC received two complimentary tickets to the 2025 Local Energy Solutions (LES) Conference. She asked if any ECC members were interested in attending. Chair Murphy thought it would be appropriate to have the Committee represented, stating the Conference was designed, in large part, for municipal energy. Committee members agreed to inform Ms. Fortson a few weeks in advance of the registration deadline if interested in participating (she would email to follow up). Mr. Murphy and Dr. Leversee had both attended in the past.

Dr. Leversee recalled the Committee spending part of its Budget on two extra tickets for the 2024 Conference and Ms. Fortson said that was correct. Ms. Fortson said the ECC's annual Budget is \$250 and in 2024 ticket prices were \$125 each, so the Committee approved expending up to the remainder of its Budget. Ultimately, the Committee did not expend those funds on tickets, and the Budget was used on a tablecloth and banner instead. If the Committee wanted to send multiple people again this year—beyond the complimentary tickets—it could expend the same. Ms. Fortson confirmed the Committee's current Fiscal Year 2026 Budget began July 1, 2025 and would end on June 30, 2026. Councilor Lake noted that two additional tickets would deplete the Committee's entire \$250 Budget. Ms. Fortson confirmed the 2025 ticket prices were \$124.56 each. Discussion ensued about who wanted to attend, including Mr. Redfern and potentially Chair Murphy (if no other first timers). Chair Murphy suggested the Committee should try to work with the complimentary tickets.

Councilor Lake suggested, if more than two people might want to attend the Conference in 2026, the Committee may want to consider other things (e.g., tabling items) it needs to spend the Budget on before the end of the 2025 fiscal year, so the funds would be available. Vice Chair Roth asked if that would be a line item in the Budget (i.e., fiscal year) or an ask from the City Council at the end of the calendar year. Councilor Lake said it could happen in one of a few ways. The Council's Finance, Organization and Personnel Standing Committee could recommend that the Council make Budget changes as needed and could formally request that of the City Manager. Councilor Lake thought it would be important to discuss what the ECC would actually need the funding for. If the Committee thought it needed more funding, he said it would be important to create a line item and discuss what that funding would need to be. Vice Chair Roth said he could envision adding two more registration fees for this Conference in 2026 since

there were already three people potentially interested. Dr. Koning said she would also be interested in 2026. Mr. Redfern said he would pay for his own ticket next year, so someone else could attend.

8) Community Power – Update from Good Energy in Advance of Upcoming Outreach

Chair Murphy welcomed Patrick Roche of Good Energy for an update on transitioning to the Keene Community Power Program's next Electricity Supply Contract. He recalled speaking to the ECC early in 2025 about the next contract and preparing for any potential changes. Then, the City went to bid, of which he reported the results to the Committee. Mr. Roche said Good Energy would be doing public outreach and engagement during fall 2025. He recalled the original contract launching in June 2023, with prices locked in for 30 months (through the December 2025 meter reads). Meaning, the new contract prices would take effect with the December 2025 meter reads.

During spring 2025—with some guidance from the ECC—the City updated its Community Power Plan to allow the Program to collect a fee to fund clean energy and sustainability projects, if desired (not required). In the spring, the City also decided to increase the amount of renewable energy in the Keene Standard program option from the default, opt-out option of 35% total to 50% total. This was a way to move toward the City's greenhouse gas emission goals. Later in the spring, the City went to bid and successfully locked down a new contract.

Mr. Roche described the new 24-month term (December 2025–December 2027 meter reads), displaying a graphic that compared the new rates for each product to the previous. He pointed out the shift of the default from 35% to 50% renewable energy. Keene The Community Power Rates by Plan are as follows (*rates are in cents per kilowatt hour*):

- 25% Renewable Energy
 - 2023–2025: 11.10
 - 2025–2027: 11.20
- 35% Renewable Energy
 - 2023–2025: 11.47 (*default*)
 - 2025–2027: 11.58
- 50% Renewable Energy
 - 2023–2025: 12.05
 - 2025–2027: 12.10 (*default*)
- 100% Renewable Energy
 - 2023–2025: 13.09
 - 2025–2027: 13.89

Mr. Roche noted that the Keene Basic 25% renewable option would meet the NH minimum standard. Keene Basic was directly comparable to Eversource's rate. By 2027, the Keene Basic rate would have stayed the same essentially the same for four years. For price stability, Mr. Roche thought this renewed contract hit the mark. He commented on the cost increasing from

11.47 cents under 35% default renewable to 12.10 cents under the new 50% renewable default. He also said people could still opt-down to the 35% renewable or opt-up to the 100% renewable options.

Mr. Roche highlighted the environmental impacts under the current vs. renewed contracts:

- Annual Voluntary Renewable Energy Purchased (mWh):
 - Current Contract: 8,432
 - Renewed Contract: 13,670
- Annual CO2 Emissions Avoided (lbs.):
 - Current Contract: 6.3 million
 - Renewed Contract: 9.7 million
- Acres of U.S. Forest Preserved from Conversion to Cropland:
 - Current Contract: 19
 - Renewed Contract: 26
- Tree Seedlings Grown for 10 Years:
 - Current Contract: 47,425
 - Renewed Contract: 73,205
- Pounds of Coal Burning Avoided (lbs.)
 - Current Contract: 3.2 million
 - Renewed Contract: 4.9 million

Next, Mr. Roche talked about education and outreach, recalling that the new prices would take effect with the December 2025 meter reads. He noted that two thirds of Keene's meters are read on the first of the month and the remainder at mid-month. So, he thought the change would take effect around mid-December and residents would see the new prices reflected on their bills by mid-to-late January 2026. To notify the public of the change in advance, so they have an opportunity to act if they want, the Keene Community Power website will be updated with the new prices and basic messaging in mid-October 2025. In early November, participants will receive a notification by mail, informing them of the upcoming products; this would be the main advertisement of the price change to the community. Simultaneously, the City would perform broad-based outreach (e.g., press releases, social media posts, etc.) to spread the word. Key themes of communication in this public outreach would include:

- Participants would be automatically transferred to the new terms for their *current* products. For example, 90% of customers are currently on the Keene Standard (35% renewable, 11.47 cents/kWh) option and they would be automatically transitioned to the *new* Keene Standard (50% renewable, 12.10 cents/kWh) option.
- Participants could always opt-out *or* switch their products (at any time).
- Non-participants would be welcome to join at any time.
- No action is necessary to remain in the Program.
- Environmental impacts both individually and as a City, including progress toward City goals (including making people aware of the 100% option if they want to have more of an impact).

- Price stability, with roughly the same underlying price over four years (Mr. Roche commented on the potential for volatility and provided some examples).
- Transparent reminders of how to opt-up and down (or out if desired).

Mr. Roche shared the upcoming timeline before welcoming questions from the Committee:

- New Prices Take Effect: December 2025 Meter Read (12/01/2025 or 12/16/2025 for most of the community).
- Mid-October 2025: Community Power Program website publishes new prices.
- Early November 2025: Program participants receive mail notification of upcoming products.
 - Broad-based City outreach (e.g., press releases and social media posts).

Mr. Redfern asked how to get this information added to upcoming ECC flyers. Mr. Roche said his colleague Allison could take the lead on drafting that and coordinate the content with Ms. Fortson and/or Senior Planner, Mari Brunner.

Ms. Maxfield stated her understanding was that the NH Public Utilities Commission (PUC) allowed the per meter distribution price to increase by \$5/meter/month. She asked if there was messaging about it the ECC should know and could share. Ms. Maxfield asked if she misunderstood the PUC's decision. Mr. Roche said it was a great point and Ms. Maxfield understood correctly. Mr. Roche explained that the PUC distribution increase would *not* be on the supply side of a consumer's bill, which is part that the Community Power Program would be affecting. He said it was a good point that these public communications could point out how the PUC increase is not related to the City's Program.

Chair Murphy referred to the environmental statistics, asking if they were estimates/best guesses. Mr. Roche said yes, they were best guesses. He said the existing contract was based on participation and usage, but the renewed contract was based on a best guess of what ongoing usage of and participation in the various products would be. Chair Murphy asked if Good Energy was willing to help the ECC develop materials to market the Community Power Program at upcoming events. Mr. Roche said yes, they would work in helping to promote the City's progress and impact.

Councilor Lake asked about the cost changes. He found it interesting that the Basic Plan increased .10 cents/kWh and 100% renewable decreased .01 cents/kWh, for example. He wondered if that was due to particularly good growth in the renewable sector compared to the City's non-renewable sources; he asked if the trend might continue in the future given initiatives coming from the state and federal government in the renewable sector. Mr. Roche said it was an interesting question. Related to the state standard for renewables, he said the minimum standard essentially peaked in 2025 and would be consistent thereafter, whereas when Keene's Program started, the minimum was still increasing annually. Mr. Roche explained that in the current

contract (2023–2025), the average amount of additional renewable energy the supplier had to purchase on a participant’s behalf to get them up to 50% or 100% was more.

Because the state minimum would be a little bit higher and flatlined in the renewed contract, that average amount of additional renewable energy would be lower in the renewed contract, which was what Councilor Lake saw; it would not be the same difference between each of the products to reach 100%, but 75% would be added every year (closer to 78% in the previous contract, a higher cost). To Councilor Lake’s other point, Mr. Roche said there had been a lot of positive activity in the market. Mr. Roche said a zero-emission transmission line from Canada was bringing a lot of hydropower to Massachusetts through Maine. He cited some large offshore wind turbine farms also. He thought those efforts might be why some of the cost per unit of voluntary additional renewable energy decreased. Mr. Roche said that procurement happened before a lot of tariffs, which was good because the lower prices were locked in.

Ms. Fortson said that she would request Mr. Roche’s presentation slides and share them with the Committee following the meeting.

Vice Chair Roth saw a note about Eversource’s new utility rate taking effect on February 1, 2026 and asked if that would be their distribution charge. Mr. Roche said that it only highlighted Eversource’s supply cost changing every six months (during the months of February & August). Their new rate had just taken effect at 11.196 cents/kWh, nearly the same as the City’s Keene Basic option at 11.20 cents/kWh. Earlier in 2025, the PUC approved Eversource at a higher rate doing more open market and spot market purchases for its supply, of which it had done some.

However, he said Eversource still mostly procured a set amount of power on a set day twice per year. As a result, Eversource was limited in how much power it could purchase when the market was good; if the market was bad, they would have to take the power. Mr. Roche said historical data showed this could help lower costs, but could also expose the utility to more market volatility. He thought that was the difference with Keene’s program stability and capped prices.

Chair Murphy thanked Mr. Roche for the update.

9) Work Groups – Report-Outs From First Meeting

Chair Murphy recalled that at the July meeting, the Committee established three work groups to start meeting individually and report out on progress and updates at each ECC meeting.

A) Outreach

Dr. Koning, Mr. Redfern, and Dr. Leversee met. Dr. Koning reported that Mr. Redfern would write an article for the Monadnock Shopper News either on October 29 or November 26 (to be determined), explaining the ECC’s work and the Community Power Program. The Outreach Work Group hoped to use some of the Committee’s Budget for tabling materials (e.g., stickers to

engage kids, which bring adults too) and wondered about the procedure for those requests or help from the Community Development Department to design the stickers. The work group also discussed a raffle, with Mr. Redfern's idea of a solar phone charger (approximately \$25).

Dr. Koning said they struggled to find an inexpensive sticker source and Ms. Fortson said it would depend on the quantity. Dr. Koning provided an estimate for stickers and the raffle of \$145.00. Chair Murphy asked if these would be needed for upcoming events. Dr. Koning hoped to have them for tabling on September 21st. Ms. Fortson said the Committee should vote to expend the funds at this meeting. Chair Murphy asked if Mr. Redfern wanted feedback on his article and he said he was glad to work with Dr. Koning and/or Ms. Fortson.

The Committee returned to the Budget discussion at the end of the meeting.

B) Policy

Councilor Lake and Ms. Nebenzahl met with Matt Boulton; Vice Chair Roth and Ms. Oursler might join in September. They mostly discussed the Clean Energy NH webpage and the good resources there like bill tracking, monthly meetings (January–June), and events. The Policy Work Group's future topics to discuss include: (1) the City's need for a sustainability coordinator and if the ECC could support the City's search; and (2) the requirements in the parking section of the Land Development Code.

Councilor Lake notified City Staff of an upcoming Zoom webinar on September 11, 2025: *New Solar Zoning Guidance for NH Communities*. Ms. Fortson agreed it was pertinent, and she had not heard about it yet. She noted that the City does have Solar Energy System Conditional Use Permit process included as part of the Land Development Code, which includes specific definitions and use standards, at least for ground-mounted solar. She was unsure whether the City was planning to change those standards, but thought it was worth attending the webinar to learn about the differences between their recommendations and the City's regulations.

C) Resilience

The Resilience Work Group had not met. Current members include Chair Murphy, Vice Chair Roth, and Dr. Russell. A member of the public, Carolyn Sweet, also indicated she was a member. Chair Murphy agreed to coordinate a Resilience Work Group Zoom meeting to discuss both subject matter and leadership. He was impressed with what he heard from the other two work groups, and was confident this group would catch up.

Chair Murphy returned to the Outreach Workgroup's Budget request.

A motion by Dr. Koning to spend up to \$125.00 of the Energy and Climate Committee's Budget on stickers (approximately \$100) for tabling and a solar phone charger (approximately \$25) for a raffle was duly seconded by Dr. Russell. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

The Committee confirmed these would be generic ECC stickers to be used at any Committee tabling event. Discussion ensued about how staff would help to purchase the items with the Committee Budget. There were raffle tickets remaining from previous Master Plan events that the Committee could use. Ms. Maxfield asked if there were any free, “Opt-Up the Community Power” stickers remaining. Ms. Fortson said some but not many.

10) New Business

No new business was presented.

11) Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 at 4:30 PM

12) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Murphy adjourned the meeting at 5:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker
September 3, 2025

Reviewed and edited by,
Megan Fortson, Planner
September 22, 2025