

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

**ENERGY & CLIMATE COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, March 25, 2026**

**4:30 PM**

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

**Members Present:**

Gordon Leversee, Chair  
Maureen Nebenzahl, Vice Chair  
Paul Roth  
Steve Larmon  
Timothy Murphy  
Jake Pipp, Alternate (Voting)  
Charles Redfern, Alternate (Voting)  
Catherine Koning, Alternate (Voting)  
Rowland Russell, Alternate (Voting)

**Staff Present:**

Megan Fortson, Planner  
Paul Andrus, Community Development  
Director (left early)  
Don Lussier, Public Works Director (left early)  
Kürt Blomquist, Emergency Management  
Administrator (left early)

**Members Not Present:**

Councilor Bryan Lake  
Annu Joshi Bargale  
Clair Oursler  
Lisa Maxfield  
Matthew Boulton, Alternate

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

Chair Leversee called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

Mr. Pipp participated remotely from New Haven, Connecticut. He was calling alone.

**2) Approval of Minutes – February 25, 2026**

A motion by Dr. Koning to adopt the February 25, 2026 meeting minutes was duly seconded by Mr. Roth and the motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote. Mr. Pipp abstained.

**3) Sustainability Coordinator Position Update – Mari Brunner, Senior Planner**

Chair Leversee welcomed Community Development Director Paul Andrus to speak about the Sustainability Coordinator Position on behalf of Senior Planner, Mari Brunner. Mr. Andrus provided the Committee with a high-level update on the position's functionality after meeting with the City Manager about it a few times. Mr. Andrus said he and Ms. Brunner discussed the position in terms of addressing the universe of sustainability and all the things associated with it,

and that being a long-term process. They looked at all the resources and assets in the Community Development Department and had conversations about the aspect of community contributions. He said they have approval from the City Manager to move forward with a proposed position of “Assistant Sustainability Planner”: full-time with benefits, within the Community Development Department. Mr. Andrus explained that 50% of the position’s time would be focused on the strategies, goals, and tasks that came out of the Climate Action Plan and overlap with the 2025 Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP). The other 50% of the position would be focused on contributing as a professional Planner to the planning functions in the Community Development Department; one of those functions being to help monitor the progress of the CMP as a whole and develop techniques and strategies to work with the community and Council on monitoring and updates. Mr. Andrus said that monitoring the CMP is something key for him, the Community Development Department, and is on his work plan from the City Manager.

He thought it was important to highlight that 50% of the full-time job would be dedicated to working on the sustainability initiatives associated with what the position was envisioned for. He thought those pieces were still negotiable (i.e., what sustainability projects they will work on) based on what makes sense and what should be prioritized. Mr. Andrus explained that the proposed position would be presented to the City Council in May 2026 and ultimately in June through the Budget process. The full-time position will be partly funded by a matching source, which are funds that have been committed by local contributors and come from the Community Power Fund; the remaining third will be funded by the City. Mr. Andrus said the position had reached the stage of a job description and salary range being created by the City Manager and was moving forward for approval from the City Council through the Budget process.

Mr. Redfern noted that he studied the sustainability coordinator position for the City a few years prior based on a similar position in Portland, Maine. He said Portland was very cooperative in providing information, job descriptions, and functions of the position. He wanted to know whether that information was made available to the Community Development Director. Mr. Andrus said yes, Maine is a great example. Mr. Andrus noted that City staff were proceeding tactfully with this proposal to get a foothold on the subject matter and to ensure it will successful moving forward over the next few years. He said the position needs to be sustainable. So, he said the next step would be going into the Budget process, which he said is challenging.

Dr. Russell said some of what Mr. Redfern referenced in the past research was tracking the City’s cost savings as a result of having this position. Dr. Russell thought that it would be an excellent metric for the person hired to track: every time a result of their work saves the City money, it should be documented, because then it helps to justify having the position itself. He thought that in one of the cities they looked at, the position more than paid for itself with those savings. Mr. Andrus said that it would be key for the City to get some measurable wins out of this position and continue to tell the story.

Dr. Koning asked when the job description would be available to the public. Mr. Andrus deferred to Emergency Management Administrator Kürt Blomquist, who explained the Budget process in May. The first step would be Committee Members attending the Council meeting and saying they want the position. Then, there will be a Public Hearing in early June, and the Council will ultimately vote on the Budget at their last meeting in June. Mr. Blomquist said that if the position

is approved by Council and the Committee anticipates an HR process, then the job posting probably would not be live until September or October. Discussion ensued about how realistic it would be for the advertisement to go live based on Mr. Blomquist's experience, noting there had been lot of input from people in this group and City staff to ensure they would be able to hit the ground running. He thought something that would make the story stronger for City Council would be the support for other things that the Community Development Department does; for example, they support at least eight City committees and there would be overlap with the CMP. So, Mr. Blomquist said they were trying to get the green light as quickly as possible.

Dr. Koning spoke about being a part of the group who had been fundraising and she believed all the donors were identified. She said they needed to know the mechanism of donation and when the donors would be able to see a job description. Mr. Andrus said City staff had talked about what those things might be in terms of a memorandum of understanding or some other commitment/agreement; although they were not reinventing something, he said they were still working through those details. Mr. Andrus was not yet sure when his process would overlap with Dr. Koning's and when materials would become public.

Mr. Murphy called this really great news. He knew this position had been talked about for quite a while and was sorry Senior Planner Mari Brunner was not present because she had a lot to do with it happening. Mr. Murphy talked about one of the aspects Mr. Andrus described that really resonated with him. Mr. Murphy recognized the challenge with generating funds and having taxpayer funds recur year after year if the position is to justify itself. However, he said Mr. Andrus described a work scope spanning some monitoring of the Climate Plan, the Master Plan, and more. Mr. Murphy said that it seemed to align with what this Committee discussed about the position and how to define sustainability; it crosses into many other aspects and areas, such as land use and economics. He called it pervasive and not the first thing anybody might think of. Mr. Murphy was really excited about the possibilities. Mr. Andrus agreed and added that when that time comes for the public Budget meetings, he said it would be appropriate for the Committee to come and show support. City staff would ensure the Committee knows the dates in advance. In the meantime, Ms. Brunner would be available to answer questions about the process.

Mr. Redfern wondered if the Committee should write a letter of support for the Assistant Sustainability Planner position. If so, he said the Committee would need to see the job description before it goes to City Council, so the ECC's letter can be included in the Council's packet with the position recommendation. Mr. Redfern also wondered if Mr. Andrus had the job description and material from AmeriCorps in Portland, Maine. Mr. Andrus thought Ms. Brunner might, as Portland was one of their sources. Mr. Redfern said that was an important example to him because of the cost savings Dr. Russell discussed, so Mr. Redfern suggested sharing that extremely important information with the Council. He said he would be looking for this Committee to have a packet as a sort of practice run for the City Council presentation. Mr. Andrus said absolutely, calling that a great idea. He discussed a very brief presentation he provided for the Planning Board on March 23, 2026, on the importance of tracking the performance of the new CMP. Mr. Andrus noted how it is more challenging to pinpoint those cost savings because there are many moving elements to measure within the Master Plan, so they

have to pick the elements to measure strategically. He thought the goal was to be strategic about this Assistant Sustainability Planner position.

Mr. Roth agreed with Mr. Redfern that this position is the fruits of this Committee's labor all the way back to Peter Hansel and whomever else came before. So, Mr. Roth emphasized how important this topic is to the Committee. He offered any help in the effort, whether it be emphasizing the Energy & Climate Committee's legacy and history, and progress that had been made as a City—he said Keene is head and shoulders above most any other community in New Hampshire. Mr. Andrus agreed, noting that the things the City was contemplating 20 years ago were ahead of some of the places he worked before he moved here, which is pretty impressive. So, he thought it made sense for the City to be talking about a position like this at this stage, calling it the right fit with what the community has been working toward for a while.

Chair Leversee said when he looked at the early sustainability planning documents, he found two overarching goals: (1) establishing a community power program, and (2) establishing a sustainability coordinator position. So, he said this would be accomplishing the second of those milestones for the City. Mr. Andrus hoped the Council would see this as a win for them, stating that it would not cost much, and City staff would try to make that case. Mr. Andrus thanked the ECC for its time.

#### **4) Climate Resilience Presentation – Kürt Blomquist, Emergency Management Administrator & Bryan Ruoff, City Engineer**

Chair Leversee welcomed Emergency Management Administrator, Kürt Blomquist, and Public Works Director, Don Lussier. Dr. Russell explained that this presentation came out of the ECC's Resilience Work Group, which wanted to involve City staff in discussing two overarching questions with the whole Committee:

1. When it comes to climate resilience and climate issues that the City and region might be having, what do Public Works staff see as priorities, and what work are they trying to schedule or hoping to do?
2. How could this Committee help City staff in doing that work?

Mr. Lussier said this would be more of a discussion than a presentation. He thought the simple answer to the first question was that the top priority with respect to climate change for Public Works is stormwater and flood management. He said that is where Public Works' domain and scope of practice really intersect most directly with climate resiliency. Mr. Blomquist, part-time Emergency Management Administrator and retired Public Works Director, replied that these are not the Department's priorities, it is really about what the community's priorities are. In December 2025, the City completed an updated Hazard Mitigation Plan that is available on its website. The Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) is required if you expect to receive FEMA funding in the future—from disaster relief funding to hazard mitigation programs.

The HMP identifies the vulnerabilities or threats that the community sees and then looks at what actions the community can take to minimize or prevent loss of life and damage to property as it moves forward. Mr. Blomquist said the number one thing people are most concerned about within the community is flooding. He discussed how water comes down through the middle of

five watersheds into the City limits and the City's Ashuelot River is slow draining. So, that was the number one threat and community concern mentioned. Mr. Blomquist also mentioned concerns about hazards like severe weather in general (e.g., windstorms, etc.), extreme temperatures newer to New England, wildfires, and higher frequency droughts (he mentioned the drought tracker; this was a moderately dry period). Mr. Blomquist also cited the manmade community concerns in the HMP, such as cyber threats, urban fires, and hazardous materials (transport and stationary; four state highways coming together locally). Mr. Blomquist recommended looking through the HMP. Ms. Fortson said she would send the link to the whole Committee.

Mr. Blomquist explained how the HMP goes on to identify things the City can do to prevent these hazards, ranging from increasing volume within Public Works stormwater systems to training the public about managing extreme weather events. He commented on how 72-hour response and recovery in an emergency might be a thing of the past, and people should be prepared to manage for 5 to 10 days on their own in some instances. The HMP includes approximately five pages of ongoing City activities (e.g., building code updates, maintenance) that departments are doing on a regular basis, which all continue to build back into the Budget. For example, why does the City clean stormwater systems? It is a part of the mitigation planning to help minimize future hazards.

Mr. Redfern asked if any of the City's dams were concerning at this time. Mr. Lussier said no, he the City had done a pretty remarkable job over the prior decade of rehabbing and upgrading all of its dams, not only the water supply dams; in part because of regulatory requirements, but the City spent a lot to upgrade those dams. Mr. Lussier explained that both of the City's water supply dams are classified as high hazard by New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) and therefore meet stricter regulatory requirements. So, they both had to be upgraded to a higher regulatory threshold, meaning designed and certified to be maintained in such a state that they could pass or retain 2-1/2 times the 100-year flood event (i.e., a 500-year or equivalent flood). For example, he referred to the little bit of concrete armoring exposed under the grass on the downstream face of the Robin Hood dam; basically, the whole dam is designed to become a spillway in the event of a catastrophic event without damaging the dam.

Mr. Blomquist thought one thing to keep in mind from a resilience standpoint would be the water supply aspect. As Mr. Lussier mentioned, NHDES upgraded the supply dams from a resilience perspective to protect them from failing, but no capacity was added at this point. Mr. Blomquist called the City of Keene lucky to have two water sources: four groundwater access wells plus the two reservoirs. On the topic of more droughts and high temperatures, he said the community's future water supply would be impacted by these issues. He explained one of the things that the City had implemented from the HMP is the Public Works Department's Water Shortage Emergency Conservation Plan. So, if necessary, the Public Works Director or Assistant Public Works Director / Wastewater Treatment Plant Manager could come back to talk about that plan and what would trigger activities for the community to conserve water. Mr. Blomquist said that in the long term, if Keene continues to see the droughts lasting as long as they have, there would be effects particularly for groundwater sources not recovering as quickly as they used to.

Mr. Roth noted that it would be helpful to see the City's HMP because Cheshire Medical Center just completed one too, so the two entities are on the same page. Mr. Blomquist said that hopefully they used the same threat agreements, but he thought it was great that the hospital completed a plan as well. Mr. Roth appreciated the Public Works Department's hard work and working hand in hand at the hospital. He said to Dr. Russell's point, the Committee wants to complement the Public Works Department's hard work and do as much as possible to further its mission, which is the community's mission and the ECC's mission. Mr. Roth appreciated the Public Works Department's hard work and thanked Mr. Lussier and Mr. Blomquist for coming to the meeting.

Dr. Russell asked the guests what kinds of things keep them up at night that have not received enough attention; they had shared big picture things they were doing, and Dr. Russell wanted to know about the risks, threats, and gaps they wished they could do something about. Mr. Lussier said he had talked about it ad nauseam, but the scariest bit of infrastructure that the City has is the Martell Court Pump Station and the approximately two-mile-long pipe that connects it to the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). He said that if anything were to ever happen to that, the City would have no way of getting wastewater to the WWTP. Mr. Lussier called the Martell Court Pump Station the beating heart of the system because if it stops, the City has 90 minutes to get that system operational before it is discharging raw sewage into the Ashuelot River. It does not stop and effectively can never be taken offline for maintenance and repair; it always has to be running.

Dr. Russell asked how old the pump station is. The Public Works Director said it went online in 1985. Mr. Lussier said there is obviously a lot of preventive, routine daily maintenance. A few years before this, a valve failed and was leaking untreated waste into the WWTP and the City was unable to fix it because they could not take the pump station offline. The best they could do was limit the amount of leaking until a bypass could be built; that bypass contract is going forward during summer 2026. The City is building a system to bypass around the Pump Station with rented pumps to allow for work to occur within the Pump Station. Mr. Lussier said there is no way to turn that Pump Station off without the bypass. There is no backup or redundancy in the system. He said it is the same case for the one, 30-inch pipe that extends two miles to the WWTP: if there were a catastrophic failure on that pipe, there would be no redundant pipe to use.

Dr. Koning said her question was going to be about redundancy and she was sure the answer was about money but asked whether there was consideration of a plan. She added that it seems like Martell Court sits kind of low, so if there were a big flooding event, then the pump would be flooded. The Public Works Director mentioned that the Martell Court Pump Station has flood measurements, so they can put stop logs at the doors to keep water out and there is a sump pump in it to pump water out. Still, Mr. Lussier agreed that it is right in the floodplain, which is typical because pump stations are always at the lowest point. However, he said it is definitely a vulnerability, mentioning likely needing to access the Pump Station by boat during a flood. So, the Public Works Director said that is probably the biggest thought that keeps him up at night. Regarding the question about redundancy, Mr. Lussier said that when the WWTP and Martell Court Pump Station were first built, the City originally designed them with two parallel 24-inch pipes and the decision at the time was to save money on one larger pipe.

Mr. Blomquist replied to Dr. Russell's question. Mr. Blomquist does not think the community, region, and state are prepared for extreme heat. He said the City of Keene does not have a cooling center because all the large buildings were built to stay warm, not with cooling. Most of the big church halls do not have air conditioning as some people expect and the majority of them do not have backup generation. At this point, he said the City only has the Keene Parks and Recreation Department, where a reasonable temperature can be maintained in the large spaces. Mr. Blomquist said extreme heat would continue and noted that during a long-term utility outage, solar transmission systems also go down; he mentioned the case of Puerto Rico. He said for the past several years, ISO New England—the region's utility—had been issuing the potential for rolling brownouts because the transmission is under capacity, coming from the Albany area in particular. So, Mr. Blomquist thought the low capacity was probably from a combination of high heat, high demand, and all the electrification for systems. He added that another concern is for the transmission of things in and out of the area over the next decade, calling it a major impact because there could be incidences that the City is not prepared to be able to manage. Lastly, the Emergency Management Administrator said the City is not prepared to deal with another infectious disease outbreak, which he said would occur, it is just a question of when and what.

Mr. Roth asked if the City has the right-of-way to put a redundant pipe between the WWTP and Martell Court Pump Station. Mr. Lussier said they would follow parallel to the existing pipeline.

Carolyn Sweet of Keene Housing asked what the City is doing to enable solar batteries, noting Keene Housing is installing a lot of solar and would like to move into batteries. She said batteries were still enabled through some of the grant funding sources and she expected them to come back online. Ms. Sweet asked what the City would be doing to make solar batteries possible in multifamily residences and in community centers. She said Keene Housing had explored the idea and has cooling community rooms that are generator powered and could be brought onto their solar units if they could get batteries at all their new sites for development. Mr. Blomquist said that was a question for the Fire Department and Code Enforcement, primarily because of the standards to allow a lithium battery of a certain size next to residential property, etc.

He said New Hampshire has not really done as much with those as other states. He knew there was some review for the batteries at the WWTP: one of the options with the solar field was to have a battery and to use the overage to charge the Plant. At that time, Mr. Blomquist said the cost-benefit ratio was not there. Eversource looked at putting a large cell in the Westmoreland area because they have issues with transmission constantly going down. It was an estimated \$4.2 million project, but again the cost-benefit ratio exceeded it. If the City were to truly look at resiliency, Mr. Blomquist mentioned having some type of backup to store excess energy but again said a lot of those things had gone away, although we would see again in a few years.

Dr. Russell noted City staff had shared a number of issues and the Resilience Work Group had brainstormed a rather extensive list (e.g., food security, impact of invasive species, climate, climate driven invasives, other climate driven things). He noted the ECC also has the Outreach Work Group that deals with communications and asked what help this Committee could provide in addressing some of those things. Dr. Russell obviously thought there were some public

education things the ECC could do be doing but asked what other help the staff may need. Mr. Lussier recalled mentioning that the nexus for Public Works with resiliency is all about stormwater. He discussed the need for more landform stormwater runoff solutions but the problem with those solutions (i.e., some green infrastructure projects, like infiltration strips) from the City's perspective is they work great but are much more maintenance intensive than just putting a pipe in the ground; the City is constrained by what it can actually maintain.

Mr. Lussier said that where groups like the ECC and service organizations like The Rotary could really help out would be by supporting those green infrastructure initiatives: adopting rain gardens and taking on the some of the manual labor. Mr. Blomquist discussed how when it comes to stormwater, education might be needed for private property owners about how the runoff from their driveways and properties and out into storm drains is their responsibility. There could be ways to educate on mitigating the impacts of that runoff, such as sump pumps to the storm drains that might require more labor from the property owner. In terms of Emergency Management, Mr. Blomquist suggested educating the populace about preparing when building a house, preparing for heat and long-term utility loss, and for flooding and water threats. He said he had back-to-back ideas for education because the City does not have the resources for any good, consistent educational programs. So, he was looking to the Committee to be that that consistent educational arm over time.

Mr. Lussier suggested one way the Committee could move the ball getting people doing more on their private properties to manage stormwater better would be through Stormwater Utilities under the NHDES; a few cities had studied it, but none ever set one up. The idea of a Stormwater Utility is that a property owner pays to discharge stormwater from their property, just like paying to discharge sewage into the City's sewer system. It incentivizes keeping the stormwater on your property (i.e., to infiltrate or manage). Mr. Blomquist noted that there was political opposition once the plan for Stormwater Utilities was ready to go in Manchester, New Hampshire, and it did not happen.

Mr. Murphy appreciated this conversation and hoped it would continue. Dr. Russell asked the Public Works Department to think of the ECC and the Resilience Work Group as resources. Mr. Roth wondered whether the Committee could solicit some of this information from the Public Works Department for the ECC's upcoming tabling events and Ms. Fortson said she would help to coordinate.

**5) Clean Energy NH Municipal Membership Renewal**

Ms. Fortson explained that the Committee needed to vote if it wanted to renew its current Clean Energy NH Municipal Membership. The membership is \$300 and Ms. Fortson reported that there was \$850.00 in the ECC Budget at this time; the Budget would expire on June 30, 2026.

A motion by Mr. Murphy to renew the Keene Energy & Climate Committee's Clean Energy NH Municipal Membership for \$300.00 was duly seconded by Vice Chair Nebenzahl. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote of 8-0. Mr. Pipp abstained.

6) **Expiration of the Keene Energy Plan Host Website - Transfer of Documents to City Website**

Ms. Fortson reminded the Committee that the Keene Energy Plan website (KeeneEnergyPlan.com) would be expiring soon. If Committee members wanted any specific documents or information transferred onto the City website, they should e-mail the links and/or snippets to Ms. Fortson. Vice Chair Nebenzahl asked the deadline and Ms. Fortson said mid-to-end of April because it would expire in May. Dr. Koning thought that most of the information was going to be transferred or it would just go away. Ms. Fortson was unsure whether it would all be re-posted on the City website though, it would be on file with the Community Development Department. Ms. Fortson said she would double-check. Committee members could send her a Word document or email with the links and important resources they would like re-posted on the City website's various webpages, whether the ECC's webpage, the "Going Solar in Keene" webpage, or other locations on the City website.

Mr. Redfern mentioned the solar array at the Keene Dillant-Hopkins Airport as an Agenda item for the April 2026 meeting. He said there would be 100% renewable energy for Keene if the City chooses to participate in the 5 MW project, with a \$20 million budget for the bond and a \$14.5 million project cost. He said those in charge were looking for participation from the communities who would be benefiting from the solar farm and some County Commissioners think that Keene should pay a greater share than the other communities, which confused Mr. Redfern. He said it was in the City Manager's hands to negotiate now, but he wanted to better understand the issues. Ms. Fortson offered to inquire about the status of that particular substantial renewable project before the next meeting and update the Committee. She was unsure whether it would result in the City Manager needing a letter of support from this Committee.

7) **Spring Retreat Draft Agenda Review - Tuesday, April 21st from 9AM-12PM in the City Hall 2nd Floor Conference Room**

Chair Leverage requested feedback from the Committee on the proposed Spring Retreat Agenda that he drafted with Vice Chair Nebenzahl and Ms. Fortson. Like today's meeting Agenda, Mr. Murphy thought the draft Retreat Agenda was packed, but he was glad to see the time prompts to try to keep things moving; he thought it could be an effective tool. That said, he thought there was a lot on there and wondered if it would be feasible to cover it all effectively. Dr. Koning agreed, stating it seemed ambitious. She wondered if the "Looking Back" and "Looking Ahead" would naturally go together in terms of the Committee's goals; does the Committee vaguely know whether it met any of them, and what should it be working on? She suggested less looking back and more looking ahead. Vice Chair Nebenzahl thinks it is a little tough to know where you are going unless you look back. She agreed it would be a lot of material to cover in three hours but thought looking back would also be essential.

Dr. Koning suggested doing the look back before the retreat, noting how much is available on the website. Ms. Fortson noted that it was a draft agenda, but she personally thought it would be important to have the look back component to provide a framework for where the Committee has come from and where it is right now. She said the look ahead could be whittled down as Collaborative Partnership Opportunities or Project Tracking and Benchmarking, both of which

she thought could potentially be discussion items at future meetings or assigned to different Work Groups. Historically, Ms. Fortson said the retreat has really been about gauging how the ECC is doing, whether things are working, if the focus group of each Work Group still serves the Committee in the way needed, whether any Work Groups need to change topics or the number of Work Groups. Ms. Fortson thought it could be less about exploring these specific topics and more about how the Committee wants to structurally function over the course of the next year.

Vice Chair Nebenzahl said she suggested Project Tracking and Benchmarking so every so many months (e.g., three or four), the Committee looks at what whether it is accomplishing what it sets out to achieve. She wants to track whether things happen and if not, how the Committee will get there. Dr. Russell suggested this Agenda Item not be front loaded with a presentation for the whole hour and more so that the Committee could take something from the past and look at how it leverages the future. He hoped for more interaction on the topic.

Mr. Murphy wondered if the “Potential Presenters / Meeting Attendees” on the Agenda were to have invited guests to speak at the retreat. Ms. Fortson said no, for the Committee to brainstorm potential future guest speakers at ECC meetings. Dr. Koning asked if someone would be facilitating each different Retreat session. Ms. Fortson said no, Chair Leverage would lead the Retreat like a regular Committee meeting, and it would be open, less like a presentation. Some Committee members expressed that they did not realize it would be less formal. Ms. Fortson welcomed suggestions for how to structure the Retreat.

Dr. Russell asked about two Retreat Agenda items: “2.a. Looking Back – Established Goals and Guiding Principles” and “3.b. Looking Ahead – Goals and Objectives.” He thought it would be helpful to outline what the goals have been and what the Committee thinks should be added to those. Dr. Koning agreed about integrating Retreat Agenda items 2 and 3 a little more. Dr. Russell also wondered whether the Committee has the right Work Groups. Vice Chair Nebenzahl said she was also concerned about the Work Groups overlapping. She thought the Committee should establish clear definitions of what each Work Group is, which she did not feel existed at this time. Dr. Koning also wondered if the groups could each be focused on a topic or project as opposed to more general discussions (i.e., unsure where they are going).

Chair Leverage and Dr. Koning spoke on WKBK Radio the prior weekend about the ECC. It caused Chair Leverage to review the Committee’s Charge and he was reminded of its three main goals: (1) Monitor and advocate for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, (2) promote energy conservation and efficiency, as well as the use and production of renewable energy, and (3) increase awareness of and resilience to the expected impacts of a changing climate. That is the Committee’s big picture, but the Chair heard members expressing a stronger goal for alternative energy adoption, getting information, and determining what the Committee’s role is in helping to get there. Are there things the Committee can be working on independent of things that come to the Committee’s Agenda (e.g., C-PACER and Earth Fest) and then how are those projects tracked quarterly toward the Committee’s goals? Regarding Outreach, Chair Leverage thought the public was probably really eager to hear how the City is preparing for climate impact, how it is doing in terms of energy and alternative energy, and more.

Chair Leversee's broad ideas for the retreat: look at where the Committee has been, where it is going, and how to measure its progress. Mr. Murphy thought that was great and thought those three items could be a good orientation at the beginning of the retreat to stay focused on the Committee's Charge. Mr. Murphy also suggested using the timeframes listed on the retreat agenda as suggestions to keep the discussions moving. Ms. Fortson agreed that the current agenda structure was only a draft and suggestion. Vice Chair Nebenzahl also agreed that everything could flow how members want it to, but timeframes could help guide things.

Mr. Roth talked about how both items 2.b. and 2.c. roll into the Project Tracking and Benchmarking, stating you cannot know where you are going unless you know where you have been—that is the foundation. He said if the Committee is lacking anything in the past, that it would be a project for the new Assistant Sustainability Planner. Other Committee Members agreed. Dr. Russell thought Agenda Items 2 and 3 were really well integrated in that way.

Mr. Redfern thought the Assistant Sustainability Planner's job description should include them attending ECC meetings. Ms. Fortson was unsure whether that would be the case for all meetings, but she would share the suggestion. Mr. Redfern said it made sense in his opinion. Dr. Russell recommended that it could at least be a standing agenda item for them to attend the ECC meetings for the first 10 minutes, for example, and hopefully they are able. Chair Leversee suggested crossing that bridge when the time comes. Ms. Fortson appreciated the feedback to streamline the Retreat Agenda.

**8) Community Power Mailer – Content Ideas**

To be covered at the next meeting.

**9) Earth Month Events:**

**A) Budget for Outreach & Public Engagement Materials**

There were no comments.

**B) Keene State College Earth Day Celebration – Friday, April 17, 2026 from 12:00 PM–3:00 PM at Oya Hill**

There were no comments.

**C) 2026 Monadnock Region Earth Festival – Saturday, April 25th from 11:00 AM–3:00 PM at the Monadnock Food Co-op**

Both Chair Leversee and Dr. Larmon volunteered for the ECC table. Ms. Fortson needed someone to pick up the table and tent from the Community Development Department. Chair Leversee said he was familiar with the process, and Dr. Larmon offered to help him.

**10) Work Group Report-Outs**  
**A) Policy**

The Policy Work Group had not met since the last Committee meeting.

**B) Resilience**

No comments.

**C) Outreach**

Chair Leversee and Dr. Koning had talked about the Earth Day events.

**11) Staff Updates**  
**A) SB538 Letter of Support - Request from City Council**

Ms. Fortson reported that the City Council would be signing the letter in support of SB 538, so it was with the City Manager and Mayor's office to be handled.

**B) C-PACER**

Ms. Fortson confirmed that the City Council approved directing the City Manager to direct staff to write a C-PACER Ordinance that would be introduced to City Council and the Joint Planning Board & Planning, Licenses and Development Committee in the coming months.

**12) New Business**

Dr. Russell said the foods assessment work and food security work (i.e. – the “Monadnock Region Food System Assessment”) he was doing with the Southwest Region Planning Commission could now be found on their website in draft form, so he would share the link via Ms. Fortson.

The Committee thanked Dr. Russell for arranging today's guests. If Committee Members have ideas for other guest speakers, email Chair Leversee and Ms. Fortson.

**13) Next Meeting: April 22, 2026 at 4:30 PM**

The Committee agreed to cancel its regular April 22, 2026 monthly meeting in lieu of its April 21, 2026 Spring Retreat at 8:00 AM.

**14) Adjournment**

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

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Megan A. Fortson – AICP, Planner