



July 24, 2026

Keene City Council
3 Washington Street
Keene, NH 03431

RE: Annual Report to the Mayor & City Council from the Energy & Climate Committee

Dear Mayor Kahn and Members of the City Council,

I am pleased to submit this annual report on the status, activities, and accomplishments of the Energy & Climate Committee (ECC). Over the past year, the committee has worked diligently to fulfill its charge as outlined under City Code:

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.
3. Increase awareness of and resilience to the expected impacts of a changing climate.

Two members of the committee resigned this year after years of significant service: Kenneth Swymer Jr. (former Chair) and Charles Redfern (Alternate). The committee thanks them for their good work. Timothy Murphy stepped in on short notice and served effectively as Chair until January 2026. The committee currently has two vacancies for full-time members and one vacancy for an alternate slot.

Since July 2025, the committee has functioned with three working groups: Policy, Resilience, and Outreach. These groups have met monthly or as needed to vet issues that are brought to the ECC and to follow up as needed to move items forward with all action items requiring vote of the full committee during a public meeting.

As an example, when the C-PACER program initiative was brought to the committee, the Policy working group helped organize a session for the committee with representatives from the NH Business & Finance Authority. Once the committee voted in support, the Policy Workgroup followed up with City Staff to develop the proposal, which was then approved by committee, and eventually presented to the City Council. The City Manager was then directed by City Council to draft an ordinance for the adoption of the C-PACER program in Keene, which is currently being worked on by City Staff.

At our annual retreat in May, the committee decided to continue with the current working groups, with the Policy working group meeting as needed. Additionally, the ECC decided to establish two ad hoc Task Groups, one to develop a Communications Plan and the other to work with City Staff on a Benchmarking Dashboard to track progress on overarching goals as well as the new Comprehensive Master Plan. Our hope is to make progress on each of these items with the help of the new Assistant Sustainability Planner, once the position has been filled.

Regular Work: Accomplishments for the year include our regular participation in events related to our charge, including a tabling at the Earth Day Event at Keene State College (04/17/26); the Monadnock Region Earth Festival in Railroad Square (04/25/26); and the Button Up Workshop in November 2025, which had ~25 attendees. Additionally, the ECC provided support and feedback on the updated Community Power Program rate setting and tracking of participation. Chair Leverage was interviewed about current ECC work and initiatives by Raleigh Ormerod for his radio show on WKBK in March. There is a sense on the committee that it is time to document progress towards our renewable energy goals with an expectation that the new sustainability staff and dashboard will help that effort.

Focused Initiatives: A major focus the year has been work related to establishing Sustainability-focused staffing for the City. At their meeting on June 18, 2026, City Council voted to approve the creation of an Assistant Sustainability Planner position, which has since been posted online and opened for applications. ECC alternate members Catherine Koning and Matthew Boulton are due recognition for their success with raising private funds in support of this position, which is a public-private partnership.

New Initiatives: The ECC played an active role in shepherding the C-PACER Program through the Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee and City Council showing support at each step of the process, which is still underway. We hosted a presentation from the NH Saves Weatherization Program, which is expanding to include the Keene area. Additionally, Clean Energy NH requested letter of support for Senate Bill 538 (SB538) related to Net Metering, which was drafted by the committee and forwarded to City Council.

Collaborations & Reduction of Redundant Efforts: There is an overarching effort generated by the Resilience Workgroup to remain current on the efforts of City Departments to see where there are opportunities for ECC support, collaboration, and reduction of redundant efforts. For example, Kurt Blomquist, Former Emergency Management Director, and Don Lussier, Public Works Director, came to our March 2026 meeting for a good discussion of climate resilience efforts completed by the City, including the creation and adoption of an updated Hazard Mitigation Plan.

The committee has noted that there is an opportunity for public education related to stormwater management by private property owners using rain gardens and other strategies that seems appropriate for coordinated efforts that are beyond the scope of what city departments can manage. An example of an organization that can support collaborative efforts is the Monadnock Sustainability Hub.

My personal thanks to ECC members for their dedicated good work. Vice Chair Maureen Nebenzahl has played a more active role in setting agendas and follow-up than has been typical, a change that bodes well for the committee's function and continuity of leadership. Finally, thanks to Megan Fortson and Mari Brunner for their tireless good work in support of the ECC.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Gordon Leverage", written in a cursive style.

Gordon Leverage,
Energy & Climate Committee Chair