

Energy and Climate Action Committee Meeting

Minutes – 9/15/2025

[Approved 9/23/2025]

Hybrid Meeting

Meeting Start: 4:45 pm

Committee Members Present: Michael DeChiara, Gail Fleischaker, Nate Heard (all in person)

Committee Members Absent: Greg Day

Public: Shutesbury Select Board, Town Administrator Hayley Bolton, Administrative Assistant Brennan xx, Tom Siefert, Jennifer Wallace, Bob Douglas

ECAC joined the Select Board meeting in progress.

Community Choice Aggregation

Michael reminded the Select Board that the motivation for the Town adopting Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) was twofold: 1) to provide more affordable and stable electricity rates to residents and 2) to support “greener” electricity, as possible. Michael noted that previously the Select Board approved the CCA plan provided to the Division of Public Utilities and that plan was subsequently approved by DPU. Now the next steps is for the town to decide what electrical products will be offered to residents who opt for the CCA.

Michael stated that ECAC met on Sept. 10, 2025, after meeting with Colonial Power Group, the Town’s broker for CCA. ECAC voted to recommend two products for the Shutesbury CCA.

- The default choice will be the Meets Mass. Requirements product
- The second choice will be the 100% Mass. Class I RECs product

Michael explained that in discussion with Colonial and with affirmation from ECAC member, Nate Heard, the committee came to understand that Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) do not substantially create new green energy capacity as one might expect. This is because RECs are created after a project is completed. Additionally in Massachusetts, clean energy developers may pay the Alternative Compliance Payment (ACP) and be credited with meeting the REC requirements, meaning no tangible new energy is developed. Given this situation, ECAC decided to avoid offering too many choices for REC related products through the Shutesbury CCA. The “Meets Mass Requirements” includes a greener energy mix than available currently from National Grid and it provides the least expensive energy. ECAC recommends that this be the default product for residents interested in CCA and not making an affirmative product selection. For those residents still wanting to support RECs, the 100% Class I RECs product provides that option. Michael emphasized that all residents can always opt out of CCA so the third option is the status quo – receiving energy from National Grid.

Michael further noted that ECAC recommended a three-year contract stating that the only thing ECAC knew for sure about future pricing is that the market would likely be unpredictable, if not unstable in the coming years. So, a tangible benefit for residents of CCA would be a reliable, known price for electricity. As a result ECAC recommended the longest term, three years, for the CCA contract.

Michael told the Select Board that Colonial solicited four vendors for “indicative” pricing – prices that could reasonably be expected. If the Select Board approves the CCA products, Colonial will then seek “executable” pricing which would be due to Colonial and the Town on Monday Sept. 22. At that time

the Town would select the vendor it preferred. The prices would be secured in a contractual agreement. Michael noted the same vendor must be able to provide both recommended products.

Michael then outlined the process and timeline if the Select Board voted to adopt the products. On Sept. 22 after being notified of the pricing options, the Town would approve a vendor by 2:30 pm and notify Colonial. The Town would sign a contract to secure the price. Once this happens, an outreach and communications plan would be initiated; ECAC would work with Colonial on this. This initiative would include a community forum, updating the ECAC webpages, and mailings to residents' homes by Colonial. By law there is a required 30-day opt out period. If approved tonight, CCA would begin for Shutesbury residents as of December 2025.

ECAC members Nate Heard and Gail Fleischaker provided additional, clarifying information about the CCA process and substance. This included information about the pricing and benefits.

Rita Farrell asked for clarification between the two spreadsheets that were provided by ECAC indicating the vendor pricing. Nate explained the difference in the documents but assured the Select Board that final pricing would be clear and definitive.

Melissa requested that ECAC ask and clarify with Colonial whether residents who are on fuel assistance will be included in CCA.

Rita Farrell, moved to accept the ECAC recommendation for the products and the term of the contract. Eric seconded. The recommendation is:

- The default choice will be the Meets Mass. Requirements product
- The second choice will be the 100% Mass. Class I RECs product
- That the contract term be 3 years

Farrell – aye, Makepeace O'Neil – aye, Stocker – aye. The motion passed unanimously.

Eric Stocker moved to empower the Town Administrator, Hayley Bolton, to approve the pricing and vendor provided by Colonial on Sept. 22. Rita seconded.

Farrell – aye, Makepeace O'Neil – aye, Stocker – aye. The motion passed unanimously.

Michael will follow-up with Colonial about the vote and include Hayley in communications regarding Sept. 22 call and communications.

Separate from the CCA products, Michael provided information about an encouraging new option for Shutesbury. Given that Shutesbury's residents can now be treated as a purchasing group under CCA with Colonial as the broker, the Town is able to explore solar development solutions that it could not otherwise access and which would stimulate new clean energy capacity. Colonial is actively looking for solar development projects on disturbed land, brownfields, the built environment or canopies that it can invest in via Shutesbury's CCA. If successful, this will not only enable the town to collectively create "additionality" – new clean energy capacity on the grid – but it will also contributing to lowering the rate residents pay for their CCA electricity. There are no specifics yet but ECAC will work with Colonial to further explore this option.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00pm

Respectfully submitted, Michael DeChiara