

Energy and Climate Action Committee Meeting

Minutes – 4/09/2026

[Approved 5/14/2026]

Virtual Meeting

Meeting Start: 7:03PM

Committee Members Present: Michael DeChiara, Gail Fleischaker, Nate Heard

Committee Members Absent: Greg Day

Public: None

Updates —

Monthly Updates from Colonial (Nate)

Expecting to get quarterly updates from Colonial. Nate will summarize the quarterly updates and send to Hayley to include in her Friday Five, sharing dollar savings to town residents and citing the number of participating households, emphasizing the high participation rate in Shutesbury's CCA program.

Stormwater committee (Michael)

No news to report.

School lighting (Michael)

Michael met with Hayley and Police Chief Devon Pelletier. Hayley had to leave early, but Michael had a good conversation with Devon concerning security concerns of lighting. The current lighting system on the building and in the parking lot is light detection, which means that lights come on when it gets dark and stay on all night. Devon would be fine with motion detection, actually better for security in that lights coming on sends a message of activity. There's no apparent opposition from School Principal, School Committee, or Select Board, but two questions need to be resolved before moving forward: who would pay for installation? who's currently paying the electric bills? Gail will check out both questions.

Climate Leader Designation (Michael)

Shutesbury officially certified at the end of March, which gives us good lead time before the grant deadline. Not many communities with designation (35 total in MA; Ashfield, Shutesbury, & Warwick in Franklin County), so still have a window to be competitive.

Solar project with Colonial

Michael and Mark Cappadona (Colonial Power Group) have a follow-up meeting with MassDOT next week. Question from last meeting concerned permitting. I.e., if Colonial identify a potential site MassDOT, who is the permitting body? If the project is developed

along the Mass Pike and runs through a town jurisdiction, would it require town permitting? Or, does MassDOT have special status as a state agency to permit projects on land they control. Mark would happily scope out towns to combine for demand to meet the supply of big site or multiple sites MassDOT could provide. Exciting to think we could develop a model that shows how municipalities can use CCA to develop solar.

Franklin County Energy Code Collective calls (Nate)

Nate participated in a couple of recent phone conversations conducted by Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships (NEEP), a non-profit organization trying to accelerate energy efficiency projects. NEEP is convening the Franklin County Energy Code Collective for a call with communities in Franklin County and have speakers address how they successfully got Opt-In Specialized Stretch Code approved at Town Meeting (it was voted down at Deerfield TM). Nate relayed our experience with outreach, how we promoted advantages, and how we addressed questions raised. NEEP's efforts are aimed particularly at Deerfield since the Code's coming up again at this year's TM. Michael noted (from the Franklin County Energy Committee last week) that passing the Opt-In Stretch Code was toughest box to get checked in applying for Climate Leader status.

Technical Assistance (TA) Grant (Michael)

In regard to our decarbonization planning for municipal buildings, Michael reached out to Energy Source, the MassSave consultants who did the energy audits on all our buildings. Energy Source does smaller municipal projects so gave Michael names of two engineering firms that do the larger projects. What documentation is needed to apply. Michael met with Hayley to talk about next steps and decided to complete the spreadsheet to get information for technical, financial, & feasibility assessments of geothermal at SES, and if not, air-source heat pumps at SES and everything else on our list of things in our decarbonization roadmap. Michael will talk with the two engineering firms and choose the better match to come to town to inspect our buildings (and give us language for our grant application). Technical Assistance Grant application is due to DOER by end of May. If we get the grant, it's conceivable we'd have information in time to go for the Climate Leader \$1million grant in February 2027, or if not, in August 2027.

Different Ways to Solve the problem (Nate)

Given the various things we've undertaken in looking at energy problems (building audits, grant funding, etc.), what's the sequencing of events to determine solutions for SES? Nate reached out to several superintendents of schools with a footprint roughly similar to SES to ask about their proposals for heat pump retrofits of existing infrastructure, specifically to ask how they came to that technical decision. The ARP bucket of money for school heat pump retrofits opens up every two years, next in early 2027. Trane Technologies is doing heat pump retrofits with schools in Massachusetts, with a soup-to-nuts approach — audit, assess, build, install.

We did have one meeting with representatives of the several committees trying to develop best solutions for SES, but that's not an ongoing conversation. Even with a technical scoping of the building, what's the process for choosing vendors? bidding? contracts? And who's to

lead the effort? How can ECAC best inform the conversation? The concern: don't want to just pick some firm and end up in some path dependency that puts us in a place that's sub-optimal in terms of time, money, and the solution itself at the end of the process.

Michael: As SES Principal, Ann has to be in the loop (re budget), but the primary partnership is ECAC, Buildings Committee, and Hayley at the center of the hub and we can loop in others as needed (FinCom, Capital Planning, Select Board). We can apply for the TA grant by the end of May, making the school as primary site but including assessment for re-use of Town Hall and the Spear building as well. We'd start by getting one of the recommended engineering firms to walk through the buildings and provide scope and language for us to write a breadth of options into the TA grant. If we get the TA grant, we'd end up with the specific technical documentation to take to vendors for the \$1million Community Leader grant.

Leverett's MLP (Michael)

During the Franklin County Energy Committee discussion, Richard (?) on the Leverett Planning Board mentioned that they're thinking about creating a second MLP that will look only at energy, creating a town-wide microgrid that will send residential solar to municipal buildings instead of to Eversource. Nate pointed out that if we were to go that route in Shutesbury, it would supplant our current CCA. Could be the next step?

Internship possibilities (Nate)

Nate noted that in his experience, it takes a lot of work to generate 20 hours of work for an intern. It's a lot for 20 hrs/week. Good offer, but not a good fit.

Minutes

Gail moved to approve the minutes from 3/17/2026. Michael seconded.

Vote to approve minutes: Michael DeChiara, Aye; Gail Fleischaker, Aye; Nate Heard, Aye

Next meeting date

The next ECAC meeting is scheduled for May 12th.

Meeting Closed

Nate moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:09 PM. Gail seconded.

Vote to adjourn: Michael DeChiara, Aye; Gail Fleischaker, Aye; Nate Heard, Aye

Respectfully submitted, Gail Fleischaker