

Energy and Climate Action Committee Meeting

Virtual Meeting

Minutes – February 3, 2026

Approved March 17, 2026

Meeting Start: 7:01 pm Eastern

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

Additional Present: Mark Cappadona and Denise Allard of Colonial Power Group

- Michael DeChiara calls to order 7:01
 - Introduces Charles Gilliam
- Charles introduces himself and expresses interest in observing ECAC
- Michael recounts a meeting he had at both the new library and the town hall with Frank and Steve from Buildings committee and Matt from the school
 - Matt gave Michael a walkthrough of the heating system at the school
 - School uses two systems:
 - Baseboard hot water (heated by boilers), runs all the time
 - Ductwork for air filtration (also heated by boilers), only runs while occupied
- Last week of January, the Building committee investigated air-source heat pump installation at M.N. Spear building
- Michael discusses Climate Leader certification
 - He emailed about climate leader community certification and was told we will hear back in the Spring, as early as April
 - Michael assumes we will get the certification
- Nate fills in the group about outreach to Eversource customers with regard to CCA
 - Eversource customers can opt in to 100% renewable RECs
 - All details will be sent to customers via mailer from CPG (Colonial Power Group)
 - Denise Allard from CPG confirms that CPG's website has been updated to include information for both Shutesbury utilities (National Grid and Eversource)
 - Sign-ups on CPG website for optional CCA RECS are live
 - Michael follows up and thanks Mark & Denise for their work
 - Gail asks about current MA cost reduction from the Governor and Mark Cappadona explains that one discount is a postponement (amortization), and some discounts are money being returned to constituents
- Greg fills in committee on status of Stormwater Mitigation committee- still waiting for announcement of first meeting of SMIC but is prepared with having done the reading
- Michael turns discussion to pursuing a community solar project
 - Mark Cappadona describes the potential for a community solar project
 - The size of our town should be ideal for a 1-2MW solar installation
 - Mark describes idea from CPG to build more solar on roads
 - Unfortunately all work on building those solar installations has moved on from the company that worked on them

- Most highways have 3-phase power already running along them, which will reduce costs
- Goal is to **not cut down any more trees**
- Mark shares information regarding relationships (23-24 minutes in to call)
 - Solar provider builds solar field as a community solar project for Shutesbury
 - Shutesbury asks that provider a “QF” (qualified facility), so that solar provider takes payment for energy production
 - Mark describes current issue where solar providers are not servicing low-income customers because most providers are not acting as QF, so discounts through utility companies to low-income customers could be withheld, which does not incentivize solar providers to participate
 - CPG will need to churn through data to make sure all accounting is correct
 - Solar provider will give a per kwh discount across all accounts (Mark used made-up numbers to provide a clear example) which will automatically be applied
 - “True additionality” - money flows back to constituents
 - While the finances for this project are designated for “low income customers”, criteria is met for 63 out of ~700 customers in Shutesbury, Mark believes CPG can file an exemption to have the discount apply to all households.
 - Michael mentions that having additionality without cutting more trees aligns perfectly with ECAC’s goals
 - Greg asks about potentially focusing more on benefiting low-income households specifically
 - Benefits will be based on developments so this is a work-in-progress, discounts can be applied in ways that Shutesbury decides
 - Still depends on approval from DOER
 - Memorandum of Understanding is a 20 year contract with solar provider, but Mark comments that if there is an issue with Shutesbury’s, it may be possible to move that contract to a different community
- Mark and Denise leave call after discussion
- Nate comments on 20 year memorandum; the length of the agreement is a part of what allows different organizations to count on the work continuing
- Charles Gilliam comments in agreement with using land that is already in use and wired
- Michael shifts gears to grant acquisitions
 - Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP)

- Michael attended a webinar about it
- Town has written policy to qualify which Michael wrote years ago
- “Action grant” requires finances and specs of project to be fully documented, which makes it difficult to get grant money from MVP
- Next grant deadline is **March 20th**
- State clean energy process cares about “cumulative impact”, which includes both environmental and environment justice topics
 - Office of Environmental Justice and Equity came up with “Mass Environmental Score” to measure cumulative impact
 - Have to score 75 or above to be competitive to receive grant
 - Michael believes this score will be difficult to achieve for most rural towns because we do not meet the criteria for an environmental justice community
 - Last year only ~40% of applicants were approved
- Climate Leader grants
 - Up to \$1 million
 - Shutesbury is much more competitive for this grant
- Greg mentions he will keep MVP in mind during first SMIC meeting
- Gail agrees with Michael that we should prioritize and focus on Climate Leader grants
- Nate calls out lead time for applications can be quite long so it makes more sense with our capacity to stay focused on less grant applications that we have more competitiveness with
- Nate mentions Hayley has an idea to create a spreadsheet to track all grant activity in town
 - Michael comments that communication from the state on timelines can be difficult and agrees to put discussion of documentation process on agenda for next meeting
- Discussion moves to minutes
 - Greg moves to approve meetings from January 6, 2026, Nate seconds
 - Gail- aye, Greg- aye, Nate- aye, Michael- aye
- Michael asks Charles for opinion on meeting
 - Charles needs more time to think and will discuss more with Michael
- Date for next meeting set for March 10th, 7PM EST
- Greg moves to adjourn, Gail seconds
 - Nate- aye, Greg- aye, Gail- aye, Michael- aye

Respectfully Submitted,
Greg Day