

Energy and Climate Action Committee Meeting
Minutes – 3/17/2026
[Approved 4/09/2026]
Virtual Meeting

Meeting Start: 7:04PM

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

Committee Members Absent: None

Public: None

Updates *Community Choice Aggregation / Community Solar / Stormwater Committee*

Michael provided an update on dialogue with Colonial Power Group regarding the potential distribution of rate cuts following the development of a community solar project. Michael and Mark Cappadona met with DOER to see if, through SMART 3.0, a community can build a solar installation and distribute a rate benefit. There is a mechanism through CCA to distribute a rate benefit not to all households but at least to the community's low-income households. The SMART specialist at DOER said a benefit could be extended to Shutesbury's 63 low-income households and perhaps additional low-income households in other communities.

There is good movement on the idea to develop solar along highways or other state-owned assets. Colonial has contacts at MassDOT but they haven't always been successful in engaging them. However, Michael was able to obtain a conversation with MassDOT through his network. There is an office that focuses on strategic partnerships and innovation at MassDOT. That office is identifying land and assets where they might put solar, so Shutesbury in partnership with MassDOT, Colonial, and a developer, could potentially create additional solar and a model for others.

The Stormwater Committee is not yet off the ground. Greg has volunteered and is has been reading Task Force documentation.

Frank McGinn joined the conversation.

Climate Leader Community

We expect to gain Climate Leader Community status in April. We reviewed the requirements for Decarbonization Accelerator Grant applications and considered what project or combination of projects the town might prioritize. Towns may only apply once. However, the grant application could be one \$1,000,000 request or a combination of smaller requests (e.g. 10 \$100,000 requests).

Of the municipal buildings, Shutesbury Elementary School (SES) is by far the largest emitter of carbon pollution. We focused on the potential of replacing oil-based heat with a ground-source heat pump. Prior to the installation of heat pumps, building envelopes should be tight. Frank assured that the SES envelope is tight and we discussed aspects of the oil-based heating system that is currently in place.

Frank gave an update on the oil tank at SES. Although a valve has leaked, the tank itself might be fine. DEP will test soil for hydrocarbons at multiple distances from the tank. There is a scenario in which the tank needs to be replaced in the near term, thereby locking in fossil fuel use at the school for decades. Scenario 2 is that the tank is fine and we do maintenance while we conduct an engineering study for ground-source heat pump.

Given these unknowns, and the large expense of a heat pump at SES, a grant application might prioritize all of the other things highlighted in our Decarbonization Roadmap and save SES decarbonization for last.

Minutes

Gail moved to approve the minutes from 2/3/2026. Nate seconded. Vote to approve minutes: Michael DeChiara, Aye; Gail Fleischaker, Aye; Greg Day, Aye; Nate Heard, Aye

Next date

The next ECAC meeting is scheduled for April 14.

Close

Nate moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 PM. Gail seconded. Vote to adjourn: Michael DeChiara, Aye; Greg Day, Aye; Gail Fleischaker, Aye; Nate Heard, Aye

Respectfully submitted, Nate Heard.