

**Town of Sudbury
Energy and Sustainability Committee (ESC)
Minutes – January 13, 2026**

Present in person: None

Present remotely: Rami Alwan, Member and Chair; Olga Faktorovich Allen, Member and Vice Chair; Jennifer Dudgeon, Member; Mary K. Farris, Member; Nate Garazzo, Member; Venk Gopal, Member; Elsa Iovanella, Member; John Keklak, Member; and Joe Martino, Member.

Absent: None

Also Present remotely: Sandra Duran, Combined Facilities Director; and Eric Simms, Sustainability Coordinator; and Sudbury TV staff

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 5:30pm by Chair Rami Alwan.

1. Combined Facilities Director Update

Combined Facilities Director Sandra Duran provided a comprehensive update on several solar energy initiatives underway in Sudbury, focusing on proposed solar canopies and future rooftop solar opportunities.

Haskell Field Solar Canopy

Sandra reported that the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) recently voted 3–2 against supporting the proposed Haskell Field solar canopy after extensive discussion. Despite the vote, the project continues toward Town Meeting, where voters will be asked to authorize a lease agreement that would allow the Town to complete detailed due diligence and confirm project economics before final commitment.

She explained that the Town remains optimistic about reaching consensus among stakeholders. A recent communication from the Town Manager indicated that jurisdiction over the parking lot ultimately rests with the Select Board. The Town has also met with Eversource to review infrastructure requirements, including transformer and electrical equipment upgrades. A potential location for this equipment has been identified near existing storage containers, with plans to screen it to minimize visual impacts.

Additionally the Curtis Middle School canopy has received ISA approval, and is moving forward for approval at Town Meeting. Sandra met with the Historical District Commission (HDC) to present the Police Station canopy concept to gauge their willingness to provide their approval.

Concerns Raised by Parks and Recreation

In response to questions from ESC Vice Chair Olga Faktorovich Allen, Sandra said the Commission's concerns fell into several categories. Some PRC members felt the project was introduced too quickly and that they did not have sufficient time to evaluate it. There was uncertainty about PRC's role versus the Planning Board's role in reviewing detailed design

decisions. Aesthetic concerns were significant, with some PRC commissioners believing the canopy would alter the rural character of the site. Questions remained regarding legal and regulatory issues, including whether Massachusetts Article 97 protections apply. Some PRC members expressed concerns that the project's projected financial savings had declined from earlier estimates.

Sandra acknowledged that the project would change the appearance of the site but emphasized that current projections still show approximately **\$2.2 million in avoided electricity costs over 25 years**, with no upfront capital investment by the Town.

Financial and Environmental Benefits

Rami Alwan noted that the Finance Committee voted unanimously (7–0) to support all three proposed solar projects.

Additional benefits discussed included long-term stability and predictability of energy costs, reduced heat buildup in parking lots, cooler vehicles for residents using the facilities, extended pavement life due to reduced UV exposure and weathering, and progress toward the Town's climate and sustainability goals.

ESC Member Jennifer Dudgeon asked whether town residents had been surveyed for their opinion about the solar canopy projects. Sandra responded that the vote at Town Meeting will effectively serve as survey results.

Community Outreach and Lawn Sign Campaign

The committee discussed ways to increase public awareness before Town Meeting.

Olga proposed a public outreach campaign, including lawn signs highlighting the benefits of the solar projects. Sandra and Rami strongly supported the idea, emphasizing that the projects belong to the community and that Town Meeting voters should make the final decision.

The committee voted unanimously to authorize the purchase of approximately **50 lawn signs**, with a budget not to exceed **\$1,000**, to promote the three solar projects. Sandra and Rami agreed to collaborate on sign design and production, while Olga encouraged using environmentally responsible materials similar to those used for previous "No Mow May" campaigns.

Decision Made:

Rami made a motion to order 50 lawn signs, not to exceed the cost of \$1,000, to support advertising the three solar projects to be voted on at Town Meeting. Jennifer seconded the motion. ESC voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Action Item:

Rami and Sandra will design and order the lawn signs.

Fairbank Community Center Solar Project

Rami asked for an update on rooftop solar at the Fairbank Community Center.

Sandra explained that ongoing water infiltration issues require further investigation before solar panels can be installed. The Town is working with engineering consultants (SGH) on a forensic study examining building design, construction, and moisture-related concerns.

Although solar panels have already been allocated to the property, installation must wait until the roof issues are fully understood and resolved.

School Rooftop Solar Opportunities

Sandra also discussed future solar opportunities at town schools. Roof replacement projects are expected to proceed at Nixon and Haynes schools, creating an opportunity to evaluate rooftop solar installations.

However, structural limitations prevent full-scale solar arrays on these buildings. Solect Energy is developing conceptual designs for smaller installations, and the Town will assess whether they provide sufficient return on investment. Any energy savings would directly reduce school operating expenses and contribute to the Town's broader solar strategy.

2. Sustainability Coordinator Update

Sustainable Coordinator Eric Simms provided an update on several sustainability, climate resilience, and renewable energy initiatives underway in Sudbury.

Zero-Emission Vehicle First Policy

The Select Board has already approved the policy. Eric met with both school superintendents and the Town Manager after presenting to the school committees.

The superintendents and the Town Manager appear supportive. The remaining step is formal approval votes by both school committees, which Eric expects will pass. He has requested that the policy be placed on upcoming school committee agendas.

New Sustainable Purchasing Policy

Sudbury's current "Buy Recycled" policy dates from 1996 and is considered outdated.

Eric is proposing a broader sustainable purchasing policy for Select Board consideration on April 28. The update is partly driven by new state requirements and recommendations. Adoption of the policy is now required for participation in the state's Recycling Dividends Program, which provides municipalities with several thousand dollars in annual recycling-related incentives. The policy is intended as guidance rather than a highly prescriptive mandate.

DEP Municipal Assistance Coordinator Application

Sudbury applied to host a Massachusetts DEP Municipal Assistance Coordinator.

The coordinator would serve a 49-community MetroWest region but be physically based in Sudbury. Duties would focus on solid waste management, recycling, trash, and hazardous waste issues. Although the position would serve many communities, Sudbury would receive additional support as the host municipality.

The state would reimburse salary and benefits, and Sudbury would receive an annual hosting stipend. A decision is expected within a few weeks.

Climate Resilience Coaching Program (MVP 2.0)

Work continues with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to develop training materials. Meetings are occurring every two weeks, and two advisory group meetings have already been held. Coach training sessions are scheduled for April 28 and May 19.

Coaches will assess residential properties for climate-related risks such as flooding, extreme heat, wildfire and other climate hazards. Property owners will receive reports identifying risks and suggesting mitigation actions. The pilot phase will focus on single-family homes. Initially, coaches will likely work with people they know to test and refine the program before broader public participation. Future outreach and enrollment methods have not yet been determined. MAPC's work with Salem and another community is providing additional resources and best-practice information.

Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment

The project is progressing. Sudbury recently received inland flood modeling data from BSC Group. The data has been provided to Weston & Sampson for development of town-wide flood maps. These maps will support The Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment, The Resilience Coaching Program and The Hazard Mitigation Plan. GIS layers will also be developed so other Town departments can use the data.

Other Sustainability Programs

Eric noted continued progress on the Locally Grown Sudbury Farmers' Market and the Climate Leader initiatives, but did not provide detailed updates during this report.

Solar and Battery Storage Bylaw Discussion

Eric raised awareness of new Massachusetts regulations and model bylaws concerning solar energy and battery storage systems. New state solar permitting and siting regulations are being implemented to streamline project approvals. Municipalities will be required to comply with mandatory implementation by October 1, 2026. The state has released model bylaws for solar energy facilities and battery energy storage systems to facilitate their adoption.

Preliminary Assessment

Planning staff believe Sudbury's existing solar bylaw may already be adequate, though further review is needed. Battery storage is a greater priority because Sudbury currently lacks a specific

bylaw covering it. The Planning Board may not take the lead on reviewing the new model bylaws, so Eric suggested ESC consider doing so.

Battery Storage Concerns

Committee members discussed fire safety and emergency response requirements, specialized firefighter training needed for battery fires and thermal runaway events, possible equipment and funding needs for the Fire Department, coordination among Fire, Building, Planning, and other departments, future municipal battery storage opportunities associated with solar projects.

Town staff noted that the Fire Department and Building Department are already actively engaged in battery-storage planning and standards development.

No formal action was requested immediately. Eric asked committee members to consider whether the committee should take a leadership role in evaluating the new bylaws. Stakeholder engagement would include multiple departments, boards, and ultimately Town Meeting approval if any bylaw changes are pursued. Members generally agreed that gathering information and beginning discussions now would be beneficial, given upcoming state regulatory deadlines.

Eric also mentioned funding opportunities from the state for fire department and first responder training. He indicated he would pursue these opportunities when they became available.

3. MAPC Resilience Conference Update

MAPC "Risk to Recovery" Resilience Conference

ESC Member John Keklak attended the MAPC-sponsored "**Risk to Recovery**" conference, which was organized by the same group helping Sudbury develop its resilience coaching program.

Keynote: Long-Term Disaster Recovery

The keynote speaker, representing the Red Cross, emphasized that communities often focus on immediate emergency response but are less prepared for the **months-long recovery period** following major incidents such as plane crashes, large vehicle accidents, or other disasters. The presentation highlighted the need for additional training for first responders and community organizations to better anticipate and manage long-term impacts.

Flood Resilience Planning

One breakout session focused on Boston's flood resilience planning. Boston is using the same flood modeling tools and maps that Sudbury is beginning to employ. These models allow planners to project flooding impacts up to 100 years into the future, compare outcomes with and without mitigation projects, quantify benefits of specific resilience investments and provide concrete evidence to support funding requests.

John noted that these tools help move discussions beyond general concerns about future flooding and toward data-driven decisions and prioritization of projects.

Community Engagement and Emergency Preparedness

Another session featured a community organization in Rockport called Town Green, which helps communicate emergency preparedness information to residents. The presentation demonstrated how local organizations can effectively supplement agencies such as the Red Cross by communicating shelter locations and power outage resources, delivering preparedness information before emergencies occur, and helping residents understand longer-term climate and flooding risks.

The discussion reinforced the value of local stakeholder groups in resilience planning and public outreach.

Municipal Cybersecurity

A third breakout session examined a cyberattack experienced by Littleton. Presenters discussed cybersecurity risks facing municipalities, preparations communities can make before an incident occurs, and lessons learned from Littleton's response.

John shared an anecdote that the FBI initially contacted Littleton officials with what sounded like a phishing attempt, causing understandable skepticism before the officials realized the communication was legitimate.

Relevance to Sudbury

John highlighted that several conference topics directly relate to current Sudbury initiatives: the resilience coaching program, the climate vulnerability assessment, use of flood modeling data to guide future investments, and improved public communication regarding climate and emergency preparedness.

He suggested that the conference presentations, particularly those concerning Boston's flood planning, may be valuable references for Sudbury as its own resilience work progresses.

Fix-It Clinic Update

John announced plans for a **Fix-It Clinic at the Goodnow Library on June 13, from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM.**

The clinic will allow residents to bring broken household items—such as fans, toasters, blenders, and other repairable objects—for diagnosis and repair by volunteer "coaches."

Goals include extending the life of household products, reducing waste, teaching repair skills, and keeping repairable items out of the waste stream.

The event is being organized in partnership with Sustainable Sudbury and the Goodnow Library.

John also invited volunteers to assist with repairs and event operations.

Electronics Workshop

John reported that he is continuing to run an electronics workshop at the Goodnow Library. The next session is scheduled for **April 30 from 7:00 PM to 8:45 PM.**

The workshop introduces participants to basic electronics and troubleshooting techniques, helping people learn how to diagnose and potentially repair everyday devices.

Proposed Regular Fix-It Clinics at the Put-and-Take

John is exploring the possibility of holding recurring Fix-It Clinics at the Town's Put-and-Take facility.

The concept would be residents bring non-working items before they are discarded. Volunteers would attempt repairs. Successfully repaired items could either be taken home or, when permitted, left at the Put-and-Take for reuse.

Discussion noted that the Put-and-Take currently has restrictions on items with electrical cords, but John suggested the clinic could still help reduce waste by repairing items before they enter the recycling or disposal stream.

He emphasized that many repairable products are discarded unnecessarily and that more frequent repair opportunities—perhaps monthly rather than only once or twice a year—could significantly increase community participation.

John briefly expressed support for a proposed canopy project at the Haskell parking lot, stating that he believes it would improve the appearance of the site.

4. KPI Data and Its implications

ESC Member Venk Gopal reported that he had compiled and shared preliminary **solar photovoltaic (PV) and energy consumption data** for Sudbury with committee members. His goal was to begin developing meaningful **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** that could help track progress toward the committee's energy and climate objectives.

Solar and Energy Data Collection

Venk gathered historical data on Sudbury's solar PV installations, including residential, municipal and public-sector solar installations, annual energy production figures, installation and cost information where available.

He also reviewed town-wide energy consumption data, including total annual electricity and natural gas consumption for Sudbury.

Proposed KPI Framework

Venk suggested using these datasets as a baseline for measuring progress toward long-term goals, particularly those being developed as part of the committee's energy strategy work.

Potential metrics include total solar generation within Sudbury, solar generation as a percentage of community electricity consumption, changes in annual electricity and natural gas

consumption, and progress toward decarbonization, energy independence and energy decentralization goals.

His idea is to update these figures annually and use them to monitor trends and assess whether community initiatives are moving Sudbury toward its climate and energy objectives.

Joe Martino asked whether the electricity consumption figures represented household usage only.

Venk clarified that the data represented **total electricity consumption within Sudbury (ZIP code 01776)**, including all sectors, not just residential households.

Venk emphasized that the analysis is still in its early stages but believes it provides a useful starting point for developing a formal KPI system. Such a system could help the committee track year-over-year progress toward sustainability, electrification, and decarbonization goals using measurable community-wide energy data.

5. ESC Strategic Planning Discussion

Olga Faktorovich Allen reported she was not yet ready to proceed with this discussion. The discussion is deferred to a future meeting.

6. Other Items

Discussion on Town Meeting Preparation and Community Outreach

Rami Alwan noted that Town Meeting would begin on May 4 and asked whether ESC anticipated needing another meeting beforehand. He felt preparations were largely under control but emphasized that members would need to attend Town Meeting and help promote the committee's initiatives.

Olga Faktorovich Allen suggested developing a concise set of talking points and supporting materials to help advocates communicate effectively. She noted that similar materials had been useful during previous discussions about building electrification and energy code proposals. Joe Martino added that the materials should include key facts and myth-busting information.

The group discussed distributing lawn signs and expanding outreach through local community networks. Olga proposed engaging organizations such as Sustainable Sudbury and other town groups, providing both signs and concise informational documents. Rami suggested reaching out to middle-school parent organizations, particularly because one of the proposed projects would directly affect the Curtis Middle School area. Olga agreed to explore contacts within that community.

Olga asked whether the local League of Women Voters might be a useful partner. Rami responded that the organization generally tries to remain neutral on advocacy issues and had not previously been involved with the committee's efforts.

A significant portion of the discussion focused on involving students in the Town Meeting process. Olga suggested that testimony from young people could be particularly compelling because they are among those most directly affected by decisions involving school facilities and community infrastructure.

Rami agreed and described several opportunities for students to be involved. First, students from the Lincoln-Sudbury (LS) environmental or energy-related groups could speak about their experiences with existing solar canopies and sustainability initiatives. Secondly, Curtis Middle School students involved in civics projects might also be interested in participating. Lastly, student speakers could provide firsthand perspectives on the use of athletic fields, parking areas, and other facilities affected by the proposals.

Olga noted that student voices would carry special weight because the projects would affect their daily lives and future community environment. She offered to ask her daughter and other students involved in environmental clubs whether they would be interested in speaking.

Rami volunteered to explore opportunities with Curtis students and described his past experience mentoring student civic projects and arranging student participation at Town Meetings.

Eric mentioned a group of Curtis Middle School students who had contacted Sustainable Sudbury about a capstone project on renewable energy who may be interested in helping advocate for the solar canopy projects. Rami welcomed the idea, while emphasizing that participation should be voluntary and not feel pressured.

Action Item:

Rami will reach out to Curtis students with regard to the canopy projects.

Olga requested that Eric assemble existing talking points and supporting information into a shared Google document. She noted that various committee members had already created effective materials for presentations and committee meetings, and consolidating them would prevent duplication of effort.

Eric agreed to provide a draft compilation, likely drawing from materials prepared for the Finance Committee (FinCom). Rami offered to contribute responses he had prepared to FinCom questions, while Olga noted that she also had material developed for the Parks and Recreation Commission concerning maintenance, heat resilience, and related topics.

The group concluded that combining these resources into a single repository would create a strong foundation for outreach and advocacy efforts leading up to Town Meeting.

Action Item:

Eric will set up a shared repository for information supporting the solar canopies. Eric, Rami and Olga will contribute material to this repository.

7. Next Meeting

ESC members agreed to hold the next monthly meeting on May 12, 2026. Rami requested that members submit items to add to the May agenda.

Conclusion of Meeting

With no further business before ESC, a motion to adjourn was made, seconded and approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:53pm.

Submitted by: John Keklak