

**Town of Sudbury  
Energy and Sustainability Committee (ESC)  
Minutes – March 17, 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.

**Absent:** Joe Martino, Member

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

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

### **1. Sustainability Coordinator Update**

Sustainability Coordinator Eric Simms reported on his activities since the last ESC meeting. The efforts Eric is working on include the Climate Change Vulnerability and Hazard Mitigation Plan (CCVHMP), the MVP Action Grant for the Locally Grown Sudbury Farmers' Market, the MVP 2.0 Pilot Project, the Climate Leaders Certification, the Zero Emissions Vehicle First Policy, and the Sustainable Purchasing Policy.

Eric reported progress on the CCVHMP, with Town Counsel having provided their feedback on the contract with BSC for inland flooding map data. This data will provide greater resolution than FEMA maps, and is more accurate in the sense that the BSC data takes climate change projections into account, while the FEMA data does not. Eric added that this data will be useful beyond the CCVHMP with application to other purposes in town.

Eric reported the Locally Grown Sudbury Farmers' Market will be held June 6, 2026, and that preparations are going well.

Eric reported that the MVP 2.0 pilot project which consists of training five resilience coaches is underway. An initial advisory meeting has been held, with four additional meetings planned. Eric is working with environmental firm MAPC on this effort.

With regard to the Climate Leaders Certification, Eric explained that the current focus is on developing a decarbonization roadmap. To this end, he and Combined Facilities Director Sandra Duran have been collecting building and municipal fleet data. So far data for LSRHS and municipal fleets, as well as building data for LSRHS, have been collected. Eric expects to submit this data with an application for Climate Leaders Certification by June 30, 2026.

Eric added that a subsequent step in developing this decarbonization roadmap will require sign-off from the Select Board, and the School Boards of SPS and LSRHS.

With regard to the Zero Emissions Vehicle First Policy, Eric reported that he has presented this policy to the SPS School Board, and expects they will support it. The policy will have minimal impact, however, as SPS owns only one or two vehicles. Eric also plans to present this policy to both the Select Board and to the LSRHS School Board, and similarly expects their support.

With regard to the Sustainable Purchasing Policy, Eric reported that Massachusetts advocates strongly for towns to adopt a comprehensive sustainable purchasing policy, and provides a template. Additionally grant funding is becoming contingent on the adoption of this policy. For instance, DPW is pursuing a recycling grant that depends on Sudbury having adopted this sustainable purchasing policy. He added that the Select Board will need to approve this policy update.

In addition to these efforts, Eric reported that he is a member of a combined MAPC and OARS steering committee to create a climate collaborative for the Sudbury, Concord and Assabet Rivers watershed. The aim is to engage with up to 36 communities in pursuing larger scale funding for climate change-related issues.

## **2. Combined Facilities Director Update**

Combined Facilities Director Sandra Duran reported on her present work as it relates to ESC. Her primary work in this regard involves advancing the solar canopy projects at Haskell Field, Curtis Middle School, and the Fire/Police station.

ESC discussed questions regarding the potential applicability of Article 97 restrictions to the proposed Haskell Field solar canopy project.

Eric reported that he had contacted professional colleagues and state clean-energy officials to determine whether Article 97 concerns had arisen in similar solar projects elsewhere in Massachusetts. While no definitive guidance had yet been received, he noted that examples may exist where solar installations have been developed on recreational properties, including a project at the Stone Zoo.

Sandra raised additional examples that had been identified by Solect, including solar canopy projects associated with recreational facilities in Brewster, Milton, Falmouth, Greenfield, and Harwich. She noted that while these examples demonstrate that similar projects have been built on recreational properties, it remains unclear whether Article 97 issues were considered or resolved in those cases.

Chair Alwan described discussions with state and local officials regarding possible pathways for addressing Article 97 concerns. He reported that Select Board Member Charlie Russo had drafted a letter to the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs explaining the project's public benefits, sustainability objectives, and limited impact on recreational use of Haskell Field. Chair Alwan expressed optimism that state officials may be receptive to such a request and indicated that obtaining administrative clarification could be more practical than pursuing legislative action.

**Action Item: Chair Alwan will work with Select Board Member Russo to follow through on sending said letter to the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs.**

ESC members also discussed concerns raised by the Park and Recreation Commission. Olga emphasized that -- beyond the legal questions surrounding Article 97 -- there were important issues involving governance, transparency, and stakeholder engagement. She noted that some members of the Park and Recreation Commission appeared concerned about their ability to participate meaningfully in future project decisions and recommended continued efforts to build trust and maintain open communication throughout the process.

ESC Member Mary Farris agreed that maintaining engagement with the Park and Recreation Commission was important and asked whether additional consultation would jeopardize project funding or schedules. Sandra responded that project due diligence and permitting activities must continue in order to preserve eligibility for available incentives, but that continued dialogue with stakeholders could occur in parallel with those efforts.

ESC generally agreed that both legal clarification and continued community engagement would be important to the project's success. ESC members acknowledged the need to balance timely project advancement with efforts to maintain transparency and foster constructive relationships among Town boards and commissions.

The discussion concluded with an acknowledgment that the Select Board would soon review the legal opinion regarding Article 97 and that further direction would depend on the outcome of that review. ESC members expressed a desire to continue advancing the project while pursuing any necessary legal and regulatory approvals.

Sandra listed other items that are completed or underway: an executed Power Purchase Agreement for the solar canopies, due diligence work by Solect, and a planned site visit to Haskell by Eversource. Sandra also reported she has submitted an application for a certificate of appropriateness to the Historic District Commission for the Fire/Police station solar canopy.

In work unrelated to the solar canopy projects, Sandra provided an update on the school HVAC study that was authorized and funded through a Town Meeting article approved the previous year. She reported that the study is underway and that the assessment of existing building conditions has been completed.

The consultants are now evaluating opportunities for energy efficiency improvements and electrification of school heating and cooling systems. Sandra noted that the study will help identify options for reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions at some of the Town's largest energy-consuming facilities.

Sandra indicated that draft findings are expected soon and offered to share the results with ESC members as they become available. She specifically invited ESC members with technical expertise to review and provide feedback on the electrification recommendations.

She also reported that the study will support refinement of the Town's capital renewal schedule and help inform the Town's 15-year capital planning process. ESC recognized the importance of the study in guiding future energy management, facility upgrades, and efforts to reduce the Town's overall carbon footprint.

### **3. ESC Strategic Planning Discussion**

ESC continued its strategic planning work, focusing on the third strategic objective: **enhancing resilience across communities and ecosystems**. ESC Member Nate Garozzo presented draft concepts intended to further define this objective, including climate risk awareness, risk communication, resilient infrastructure, and ecosystem protection.

ESC members discussed the distinction between **risk awareness** and **risk communication**. Olga noted that community communication and preparedness are important elements of resilience and suggested that climate risk assessments should help inform municipal decision-making, capital planning, and investment priorities. Nate agreed that understanding local vulnerabilities, such as flood-prone areas, should help guide future projects and resource allocation.

ESC also explored how to describe **resilient infrastructure**. Members discussed the need for infrastructure that can continue functioning during climate-related disruptions while also helping reduce long-term climate impacts. Several alternative terms and descriptions were considered, including references to green infrastructure and infrastructure that relieves climate-related stress. Members acknowledged the challenge of developing language that is both precise and broadly understandable.

Discussion also addressed whether **ecosystem protection** should be included as part of the Committee's mission. Nate noted that ESC has previously debated the extent to which stewardship of local ecosystems falls within its responsibilities and invited feedback on whether the concept should remain part of the resilience objective. ESC members recognized the connection between ecosystem health and community resilience but did not reach a final conclusion on the scope of ESC's role.

ESC Member John Keklak suggested that ESC's vision should emphasize Sudbury's role as a model for other communities. He observed that while the direct impact of a single town's actions may be limited, Sudbury can demonstrate practical approaches that other municipalities can adopt. Members generally agreed that leadership by example is an important aspect of ESC's work, while also acknowledging the importance of local action in addressing broader climate challenges.

ESC concluded the discussion without taking formal action and agreed to continue refining the resilience objective and supporting language as part of the ongoing strategic planning process.

### **4. Other Items**

Olga informed ESC that the Sudbury 250th Committee had invited Town boards, committees, and commissions to participate in the upcoming Sudbury 250th Day celebration on May 16 by hosting informational tables for residents.

ESC members viewed the event as a valuable opportunity to engage with the public, share information about ESC's work, highlight ongoing sustainability initiatives, and introduce ESC's developing vision and strategic priorities. Olga expressed support for participating and suggested that the event could help increase public awareness of ESC's accomplishments and future goals.

ESC generally agreed that participation would be beneficial. Members discussed staffing needs and volunteer availability. John volunteered to help staff the Committee's table, and Rami indicated that he would be available for part of the event. Olga noted that she would be unable to attend due to a family commitment but offered to assist in preparing informational materials.

ESC Member Venk Gopal suggested exploring whether the celebration would include a community time capsule, similar to one created during Sudbury's 375th anniversary celebration. He proposed that ESC consider contributing information about its sustainability initiatives and goals for future generations.

ESC agreed to express interest in participating in the event and to continue planning for staffing and outreach materials.

**Action Item: Olga will respond to the Sudbury 250th Committee regarding the Energy and Sustainability Committee's interest in participating and will assist with development of informational materials.**

On a separate topic, Rami reported on conversations with two members of the Sudbury Public Schools (SPS) Committee during a recent League of Women Voters event regarding the possibility of implementing school composting programs.

Rami explained ESC's previous efforts to advance composting in the schools, including funding a pilot project with approximately \$30,000 in ESC support. He noted that the SPS Committee members expressed strong support for composting and questioned why the program had not already been implemented. Rami also highlighted that the initiative originated from an award-winning student civics project, a fact that resonated positively with the SPS Committee members. He expressed optimism that renewed SPS Committee interest could help move the project forward.

Olga emphasized the importance of advancing the effort while the student leaders who developed the original proposal are still in school.

Eric reported that he had also been discussing sustainability initiatives with SPS Committee representatives, including composting and the Town's Zero Emission Vehicle First Policy. He described a recent conversation with SPS Committee Member Elizabeth Sues focused on strengthening sustainability partnerships between the Town and the schools.

Eric noted that numerous school districts successfully operate composting programs and stated that, based on his experience and discussions with colleagues in other communities, any concerns about implementation should be manageable. He expressed a willingness to work

collaboratively with the SPS Committee, school administration, and other stakeholders to help advance the program.

ESC members agreed that there appeared to be growing support for school composting and expressed hope that ongoing discussions with school leadership would lead to progress on implementation.

## **5. Next Meeting**

ESC members agreed to hold the next monthly meeting on April 7, 2026.

## **Conclusion of Meeting**

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:56pm.

Submitted by: John Keklak