

**Town of Sudbury
Energy and Sustainability Committee (ESC)
Minutes – May 12, 2026**

Present in person: None

Present remotely: Olga Faktorovich Allen, Member and Vice Chair; Mary K. Farris, Member; Venk Gopal, Member; John Keklak, Member; and Joe Martino, Member.

Absent: Jennifer Dudgeon, Member; Nate Garazzo, Member; and Elsa Iovanella, Member.

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 Vice Chair Olga Faktorovich Allen.

1. Selection of Interim Chair

As Chair Rami Alwan submitted his resignation on April 29, 2026, ESC selected an Interim Chair.

Motion:

A motion was made by Mary to nominate Olga for Interim Chair.

"Motion for Olga to be the Interim Chair of the Energy and Sustainability Committee."

Venk seconded the motion.

Vote:

5-0

2. Assignment of Minutes-Recorder

Interim Chair Olga requested that Mary serve as the minutes-recorder. Mary accepted the assignment.

3. Resolution of Appreciation of Outgoing Chair Rami Alwan

To express its appreciation for Rami's service to the Committee and to the Town, ESC considered a resolution of appreciation. Olga read the resolution, the text of which is the following:

"Resolution of the Energy and Sustainability Committee, Town of Sudbury, Massachusetts, honoring Rami Alwan for distinguished service and leadership.

Whereas Rami Alwan was one of the original members of the Energy and Sustainability Committee, at its founding as the Energy and Sustainability Green Ribbon Committee and has served the town of Sudbury continuously for more than 15 years, the last several, as the committee's chair. Whereas, from his earliest days of service, Mr. Alwan challenged the committee and the town to think boldly and creatively about affordable, sustainable solutions for Sudbury's energy independence, a posture of constructive challenge that he has carried into every project and every meeting since.

Whereas, under Mr. Alwan's tenure and advocacy as a member and committee chair, often in close partnership with town staff, town meeting, and his fellow committee members, the Town of Sudbury has achieved a remarkable record of accomplishment, including:

The Sudbury Transfer Station Solar Photovoltaic Array at 20 Boston Post Road, a 1.5 megawatt photovoltaic facility transforming the town's closed and capped landfill at the transfer station site into a productive municipal asset that operates at no cost to the town and generates approximately 1.9 million kilowatt hours annually, and has produced hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue and payment in lieu of taxes for Sudbury;

The Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School Solar Canopy, a 3,600 panel, approximately 1.2 megawatt parking canopy, interconnected in May 2015, and recognized as the first solar canopy of its kind at a Massachusetts high school, saving the district more than \$150,000 per year in energy costs, and offsetting an estimated 1,000 tons of CO2 annually;

The Sudbury Community Electricity Aggregation Program, authorized by Town Meeting in May 2015, and launched in August 2017, which provides Sudbury residents and business with rate stability, an enhanced renewable energy supply, and substantial savings, collectively returning approximately \$9.2 million to the community or roughly \$1,660 per average residential customer as of Fall 2025 with regular re-procurement to keep ratepayer costs low, while advancing the town's decarbonization goals;

Establishment and stewardship of the Solar Revolving Fund, the dedicated town meeting authorized mechanism by which solar revenues are reinvested into further energy and sustainability improvements for the benefit of Sudbury taxpayers;

LED lighting retrofits, including the conversion of Sudbury's municipally-owned streetlights from high-pressure sodium to LED technology, cutting streetlight electricity use by an estimated 50-70%, and lowering long-term maintenance costs together with successive interior LED retrofits across town buildings, including Goodnow Library, DPW Building, the Public Safety Complex, Town Hall, and the Center Office Building;

Green communities designation. Sudbury was one of the first municipalities in Massachusetts designated as a green community, unlocking grants and incentives for weatherization, HVAC improvements, rooftop unit replacements, and energy efficiency measures across the town's facilities;

Climate Emergency Declaration, Article 58, Climate Mobilization Action Plan, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, which together establish Sudbury's strategic framework for long-term climate action;

Sustained advocacy for adoption of the specialized opt-in stretch energy code, and other policy measures positioning Sudbury to meet its energy and climate commitments;

And whereas, these initiatives have, in the aggregate, delivered substantial and recurring cost savings to the Town, the Sudbury Public Schools, and the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School District, savings measured not only in dollars returned to ratepayers and to the municipal budget, but in avoided emissions, deferred infrastructure costs, and grants and incentives drawn into Sudbury that would not otherwise have come.

And whereas, throughout his service, Rami Alwan has been a model of ethics, integrity, and fiduciary stewardship, consistently insisting that public funds dedicated to sustainability be used for their intended purpose, that the committee's deliberations be transparent and accountable to the residents of Sudbury, and that every project the town undertakes would stand rigorous scrutiny on both its environmental and financial merits.

And whereas, Mr. Alwan has done all of this as a volunteer, asking nothing for himself, holding himself and his committee to the highest standards of public service, and approaching any disagreement with respect for process, fidelity to the facts, and an unwavering commitment to the long-term interests of the town.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Energy and Sustainability Committee of the Town of Sudbury hereby expresses its profound gratitude and deepest appreciation to Rami Alwan for his extraordinary service as a founding member, as a tireless advocate, and as chair of this committee.

Be it further resolved that the committee recognizes Rami Alwan as a leader of uncommon integrity whose vision, persistence, and stewardship have measurably advanced Sudbury's energy independence, environmental responsibility, fiscal health, and climate resilience and whose example will continue to guide the work of this committee long after his term as chair is concluded.

And be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be entered into the official records of the Energy and Sustainability Committee, transmitted to the Select Board and to the Office of the Town Clerk, and presented to Rami Alwan with the committee's heartfelt thanks and best wishes in all that lies ahead."

Olga indicated that the resolution would be printed, framed and presented to Rami.

Motion:

A motion was made by Olga to adopt the resolution.

"I move to adopt the resolution honoring Rami Alwan by the Energy and Sustainability Committee as read."

Mary seconded the motion.

Vote:

5-0

3. Discussion of Minutes Procedures

ESC Members discussed its history of the minutes-taking practices. Former members had served in that capacity. Joe mentioned that minutes were produced up until about three years ago. Members discussed techniques for capturing meeting discussion, including automated transcripts. Eric and Venk mentioned the existence of a minutes template.

Action Item:

Venk will forward the minutes template to ESC members.

4. Discussion and Review of 2026 Annual Meeting Results

Olga summarized the successful Town Meeting passage of the three articles authorizing the Town to sign lease contracts with Solect for the solar canopies at Haskell Field, Curtis Middle School and the Police/Fire Station.

Sandra expressed appreciation for the support at Town Meeting, and reported that geotechnical work and other processes were moving ahead at the three locations. She indicated that construction is likely to occur during 2027. The steps ahead include final approval by the Town Manager and SPS superintendent, as well as permitting.

Joe inquired whether water management is an issue with the Haskell canopy. Sandra responded that design will integrate with the present approach to water management at the facility.

Olga addressed concerns that had been raised regarding lawn signs created by the committee to promote awareness of upcoming solar-related town meeting articles. She explained that the committee had previously voted to fund 50 lawn signs as part of its mission to educate residents about what it viewed as a significant opportunity for the town.

The concern centered on the fact that the signs included language directing residents to vote a particular way. Olga noted that after reviewing Massachusetts conflict-of-interest and municipal ethics guidance, it became clear that while public bodies may provide factual information and educate voters about upcoming articles and issues, they may not use public resources to advocate for a particular vote outcome.

Recognizing this distinction, the committee treated the issue seriously and moved quickly to correct it. Olga outlined the steps that were taken once the concern was identified: all signs were removed from public locations; residents who had received signs for display on private property

were asked to remove them as well; the signs were withdrawn within approximately 24 hours of the issue being raised; Sustainable Sudbury reimbursed the town for the full \$450 cost of the signs by purchasing them and providing payment to the Town; after purchasing the signs, Sustainable Sudbury modified the messaging, removing references to ESC, and then used the signs as a private organization rather than as town-funded materials.

Joe expressed concern that an email criticizing the signs focused heavily on the alleged improper expenditure of public funds but did not mention that Sustainable Sudbury had reimbursed the town. Venk suggested that some residents may simply have been unaware that reimbursement had occurred. Olga responded that efforts had been made to communicate the resolution publicly, noting that the reimbursement and related actions had been reported in local media and discussed on community social media platforms.

Olga described the situation as an important learning experience for the committee. She reiterated that raising public awareness and educating residents are legitimate parts of the committee's mission, but that as a public body the committee must be careful not to cross the line into advocacy.

She noted that the experience highlighted the need to: clarify and better articulate the committee's mission and purpose; establish more formal funding criteria; develop standardized evaluation and approval forms for future expenditures; create clearer procedures for public communications.

Olga emphasized that the committee acted in good faith, responded promptly once concerns were raised, and remained focused on fulfilling its educational role while complying with legal and ethical requirements.

Joe asked whether the committee's actions represented a departure from past practice and whether similar advocacy efforts had occurred previously. Olga replied that town counsel and the finance director had been consulted and that the key issue was not public education itself, but the fact that the signs explicitly instructed residents to "vote yes." She explained that public entities may: provide factual information about ballot or town meeting articles; encourage residents to attend meetings and participate in the voting process; explain the purpose and implications of proposed articles.

However, public entities may not: direct voters how to vote; use public funds or resources to advocate for a particular political outcome.

Mary summarized the distinction succinctly: the committee can encourage participation and provide information, but it cannot tell residents how to vote. Olga agreed, noting that the original signs crossed that line because they explicitly advocated a "yes" vote.

5. Governance and Roles: Discussion and Consideration of Selection of Next Chair

Olga introduced a proposal to formalize the committee's leadership structure and responsibilities. She proposed three key roles:

Chair – responsible for running meetings, setting agendas with member and staff input, and serving as the committee's public representative. The chair would be elected annually and limited to five consecutive terms.

Vice Chair – would lead meetings when the chair is absent or recused, handle matters involving chair conflicts of interest, assist with drafting documents, and represent the committee externally when needed. This position would also be elected annually with a five-term limit.

Secretary – responsible for preparing meeting minutes, maintaining attendance records, retaining documents, and ensuring compliance with Open Meeting Law requirements. Olga suggested either a six-month or twelve-month term for this role.

Olga noted that the committee would soon need to elect a new chair and emphasized that the current workload borne by leadership has been substantial. She argued that the committee's ambitious goals would require more engagement from members outside of monthly meetings and that responsibilities should be distributed more evenly.

Mary strongly supported formalizing the roles and suggested having **two people share the secretary role**. She noted that work and travel commitments sometimes prevent members from attending meetings, and a dual-secretary arrangement would provide backup coverage and spread the workload. Mary also suggested incorporating governance responsibilities into the leadership role descriptions to ensure compliance with town requirements.

John focused on the secretary position and recommended creating a **standard template for meeting minutes**, making it easier for whoever records them to know what information should be captured during meetings.

Olga agreed that templates, combined with meeting transcripts, would significantly reduce the effort required to prepare minutes.

The group then discussed how the secretary function should operate. Mary reiterated that a person who did not attend a meeting likely could not prepare the minutes, reinforcing the value of having two designated secretaries. Venk Gopal proposed a **rotating secretary system**, where a member would be assigned at each meeting to take minutes for the next meeting, with substitutions arranged as needed. Olga opposed a floating assignment system, noting that the committee had effectively tried that approach in the past and it had failed, leading Rami to take on the responsibility by default. She preferred assigning a specific individual to the role for a six- or twelve-month term, with responsibility for finding a substitute if unavailable. Joe Martino suggested that the **Vice Chair could serve as the backup minute-taker**, since the vice chair's duties are generally limited unless stepping in for the chair.

This portion of the discussion concluded with general agreement on formalizing the roles, while the committee continued considering the best structure for the secretary position and backup coverage.

The committee continued its discussion on governance structure and committee responsibilities.

Venk Gopal suggested reducing the proposed limit of five consecutive terms for leadership positions, arguing that long tenures can discourage broader participation and create dependence on a single individual. He initially interpreted terms as three-year committee appointments but, after clarification that leadership positions are elected annually, supported limiting officers to

three consecutive one-year terms. Olga and other members agreed that a three-term limit was reasonable.

John Keklak raised the possibility of creating a treasurer position. He noted that, during his time on the committee, he had not seen a formal process for tracking or reviewing the Solar Revolving Fund and thought additional oversight might be beneficial.

Olga explained that financial records for the Solar Revolving Fund are already maintained by town staff. Sandra Duran clarified that the town handles the formal accounting while her office maintains internal bookkeeping records. Because the fund is already managed through town financial systems, the committee concluded that a separate treasurer role was likely unnecessary.

Rather than creating a new officer position, members agreed that the committee should review the Solar Revolving Fund on a regular basis. John suggested periodic reviews so committee members could better understand revenues, expenditures, and available balances.

Several members supported establishing a formal review schedule, with suggestions ranging from annual reviews to reviews every six months. Sandra noted that approximately \$250,000 is deposited into the fund annually and that expenditures are typically less than that amount.

To formalize oversight, Olga proposed adding a review of the Solar Revolving Fund to the next meeting agenda and having staff present a summary of the fund's balance, revenues, and expenditures. She also added Solar Revolving Fund oversight as a responsibility under the vice chair role, subject to future refinement.

The committee continued with a discussion about a proposal from Olga to organize its work around a more structured strategic framework and to establish dedicated work streams aligned with the committee's climate objectives.

Olga reviewed the strategic planning work completed so far, including the committee's vision, objectives, stakeholder map, and initiative list. She proposed creating five work streams: Climate Mitigation / Emissions Reduction; Energy and Decarbonization; Resilience, Ecosystems, and Climate Adaptation; Stakeholder Engagement and Communications; and Governance, KPIs, and Funding

Each work stream would have two co-leads to distribute responsibility while avoiding Open Meeting Law issues that could arise with larger working groups.

The work streams would eventually be responsible for developing success criteria and key performance indicators (KPIs), identifying and evaluating initiatives, recommending priorities, and coordinating with appropriate stakeholders and partners. Committee members generally supported the concept.

Olga also proposed creating a more formal and objective process for evaluating funding requests from the Solar Revolving Fund.

Suggested evaluation criteria included alignment with committee mission, quantifiable environmental impact, cost effectiveness, ability to leverage outside funding (grants, matching funds, etc.), potential to generate future revenue or reinvestment, and demonstrated value and replicability for residents or other municipalities.

The committee discussed establishing thresholds above which projects would require formal scoring and evaluation.

Sandra emphasized that the committee should think strategically about how the Solar Revolving Fund can support future capital projects and climate goals rather than serving solely as gap funding. She noted Town buildings continue to generate significant operating costs and carbon emissions, future climate and energy projects will likely require additional funding sources, and the committee should consider how the fund can help advance long-term climate action goals.

Mary agreed, emphasizing the need to move from a reactive approach to a longer-term planning model that allows funding decisions to be layered and strategic over multiple years.

Eric suggested aligning the work streams with available external grant opportunities and using grants as leverage to increase the impact of Solar Revolving Fund dollars.

Olga agreed, noting that grant leverage should be one evaluation criterion among several. She added that the committee's goal is to create a systematic and intentional process for identifying grants, evaluating projects, and deploying funds strategically. Other important criteria include scalability, replicability, and cost-effectiveness.

Joe Martino sought clarification about whether the committee would become primarily grant-driven. Olga responded that grants are important but represent only one factor in the overall evaluation process.

Olga proposed the following next steps: First, to adopt the five work stream structure, and then to develop prioritization criteria, funding eligibility standards, and Solar Revolving Fund evaluation procedures.

Several members expressed concern about the committee's capacity to take on this work. Mary observed that the committee lacks enough members to support all of the proposed work and noted that two vacancies currently exist.

She recommended sending the proposals to members before the next meeting and conducting role selections and votes then, when more members are present.

Venk Gopal agreed that implementation may need to be phased due to current vacancies and recruitment needs. He also requested clearer definitions of the proposed work streams before any vote is taken.

Joe Martino recommended focusing first on appointing a full slate of officers, in particular a secretary. He noted that previous secretaries had provided valuable structure and continuity to the committee.

The committee concluded with brief comments about vacancies. Venk pointed out that the committee website still listed former members. Eric stated he could update the website but wanted clarification on whether resignations had been formally accepted. Eric agreed to investigate the status of the resignations and update the committee page as appropriate.

Action Item:

Eric to investigate the status of resignations, and update the online member list accordingly.

6. Facilities Director updates

Sandra Duran provided a brief update on several ongoing energy and sustainability projects.

Work is underway on roof projects at Nixon and Haynes buildings. The town is coordinating with Solect Energy to determine whether solar installations can be added after the roof work is completed.

Geotechnical scheduling is progressing for the three planned solar canopy projects.

The Fairbank solar installation remains delayed due to ongoing concerns about roof leaks. The solar project itself is still planned and the interconnection agreement remains in place. Before installation can proceed, the source of the roof leaks must be identified and appropriate repairs determined. As a result, the project has been pushed back beyond its original schedule.

Sandra briefly mentioned that the DPW roof solar system is working well.

She also expressed strong satisfaction with the town's electric vehicle program, noting that the EV she uses has performed very well. She thanked the committee for helping secure the grant that supported the EV acquisition.

Sandra also provided an update on the comprehensive HVAC assessment of the schools that is currently underway. Site surveys have been completed. Consultants are now preparing technical narratives and recommendations. The final deliverables will include capital renewal recommendations and building electrification recommendations. When the draft report is available, Sandra would like John to perform an informal peer review, particularly of the electrification recommendations. Sandra emphasized that she wants help evaluating whether the proposed electrification measures represent the best long-term investment and technology choices for the town.

7. Sustainability Coordinator updates

Eric reported on the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment, Climate Leaders application, and facilities data challenges.

With regard to the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment, Eric reported that the committee-funded inland flooding data from BSC Group has been received and provided to Weston & Sampson for the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment. Weston & Sampson raised questions about the data's granularity and interpretation. A meeting is being arranged between Weston & Sampson and BSC Group to resolve those questions. The committee remains optimistic that the data can still be used.

The broader vulnerability assessment project continues to move forward. The exposure assessment findings and maps have been completed and now vulnerability assessments are being developed.

With regard to the Climate Leaders Program, Sudbury's Zero Emissions Vehicle First Policy has been completed and approved, satisfying one major requirement for the Climate Leaders application. A remaining challenge is that the required Decarbonization Roadmap has not yet been completed. The roadmap depends on collecting detailed building and energy system data for town facilities. Compiling that information has proven more difficult and time-consuming than expected. Sandra explained that the Facilities Department has very limited staffing and is already stretched thin managing various capital projects and routine operations. Much of the data needed for the decarbonization roadmap has never been consolidated in one location and may require site visits and equipment inspections.

Sandra acknowledged that the roadmap effort has stalled largely because her team lacks the capacity to gather the necessary information. She described the department as operating with a skeletal staff and relying heavily on outsourcing and extra effort from existing personnel. Sandra asked John, given his mechanical engineering background, whether he might be willing to help gather and assess facility data. John expressed interest and agreed to discuss the project offline with Sandra and Eric. Olga encouraged them to meet before the next committee meeting and develop a clearer understanding of the scope and possible support needs.

Action Item:

John to meet with Sandra and Eric to plan data gathering for the Decarbonization Roadmap.

Eric further elaborated that the current application deadline is June 30. Once facility data is submitted, PowerOptions typically requires 4–5 weeks to generate the Decarbonization Roadmap. The roadmap must then be approved by the Select Board and the schools before submission. Because of these timing requirements, meeting the June 30 deadline is no longer realistic. The next formal review deadline is in December. However, the application can still be submitted earlier and then reviewed at the next available cycle. Eric emphasized that eligibility remains intact and there is no immediate risk of losing state support. Eric contacted the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) regarding timelines and support. He is exploring whether PowerOptions could provide additional technical assistance. If approved, this support would likely be covered under the existing technical assistance agreement at no additional cost to the town.

8. Other items

John reminded the committee about two upcoming community events focused on repair and sustainability. First, a Fix-It Clinic will be held on Saturday, June 13, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Goodnow Library.

Residents are encouraged to bring broken items for repair, including small kitchen appliances, lamps, vacuums, blenders, clothing and jewelry that needs repair, and knives and tools that need sharpening.

The service is provided free of charge, except that participants may need to purchase replacement parts if required.

The event promotes repair and reuse rather than disposal and replacement.

Additionally, an Electronics Workshop open to the public will be held on May 21. The workshop is intended for people interested in learning more about electronics and electrical troubleshooting. Attendance is limited, so participants must RSVP in advance.

Committee members expressed interest in the events and discussed potential participation. Joe confirmed the date of the Fix-It Clinic. Venk asked whether the event was listed on the library calendar, and John confirmed that it was.

John noted that additional publicity would be appearing soon.

9. Next Meeting

ESC members agreed to hold the next monthly meeting on June 16, 2026.

Conclusion of Meeting

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:00pm.

Submitted by: John Keklak