Town of Sudbury
Energy and Sustainability Committee (ESC)
Minutes – June 16, 2026

Present in person: None

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

Absent: Jennifer Dudgeon, Member.

Also Present remotely: Sandra Duran, Combined Facilities Director; and Eric Simms, Sustainability Coordinator; Lynn Bureau, Sudbury TV staff; Jamie Simione, Sustainable Sudbury; Leslie Low, Sustainable Sudbury; Tom Felton, Sustainable Sudbury; Kay Bell.

A roll call having been taken and a quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 5:34pm by Interim Chair **Olga Faktorovich Allen**.

1. Approval of Minutes for ESC Meetings from January through May

Motion/Vote:

Motion by Olga to approve minutes as amended for the meeting of January 13, 2026. Seconded by Venk.

Vote: 4–0.

Motion/Vote:

Motion by Olga to approve minutes as amended for the meeting of February 17, 2026. Seconded by Mary.

Vote: 4–0.

Motion/Vote:

Motion by Olga to approve minutes as amended for the meeting of March 17, 2026. Seconded by John.

Vote: 4–0.

Motion/Vote:

Motion by Olga to approve minutes as amended for the meeting of April 14, 2026. Seconded by John.

Vote: 4–0.

Motion/Vote:

Motion by Olga to approve minutes as amended for the meeting of May 12, 2026. Seconded by John.

Vote: 4–0.

2. Meeting Minutes Process and Methodology

The committee discussed and formalized a process for preparing, reviewing, approving, and publishing meeting minutes.

Minutes Preparation Process

John Keklak explained his current approach to creating meeting minutes. He uses the Zoom transcript and video recording as primary sources, reviewing the video when the transcript is unclear. For focused discussions, he manually summarizes key points; for less structured conversations, he uses AI tools to generate summaries and then carefully reviews and edits them. He emphasized that AI can omit information it deems unimportant, making human review essential. John noted that there is a learning curve involved and suggested that future secretaries should receive one or two months of mentoring before taking over the role.

Benefits of Zoom Records

Venk Gopal noted that modern video meetings provide both transcripts and recordings, making minute preparation easier and providing multiple sources of reference if questions arise later.

Timeline and Approval Workflow

Olga proposed a formal timeline for meeting minutes:

- The secretary should circulate draft minutes within one week after a meeting.
- Draft minutes should be shared through a Google Doc.
- Committee members should review the draft and submit comments using Google Docs comments or track changes.

- Minutes should be circulated early enough that approval can occur smoothly at the next meeting.
- Approved minutes should be posted publicly within one week after approval.

Eric confirmed that he could post approved minutes to the committee website.

Roles and Responsibilities

The committee agreed on the following workflow:

1. Eric generates and distributes the Zoom transcript after each meeting.
2. The secretary prepares draft minutes using the transcript and video recording.
3. Draft minutes are circulated via Google Docs.
4. Committee members review and comment.
5. Minutes are approved at a subsequent meeting.
6. The secretary converts approved minutes to PDF format and emails them to Eric.
7. Eric posts the approved PDF minutes on the committee website.

Action Items Tracking

Olga praised John's inclusion of clearly identified action items in the minutes and proposed making action-item review a standing agenda item at future meetings. The committee would revisit outstanding action items at each meeting to track progress and ensure follow-through.

Posting Previously Approved Minutes

Eric requested PDF versions of previously approved minutes so they could be posted to the website. John agreed to provide them, creating a new action item.

Action Item:

John will convert previously approved meeting minutes to PDF format and send them to Eric for posting on the committee website.

Recording Meeting Attendance

Venk Gopal raised the issue that Zoom transcripts do not capture attendees who are not panelists or speakers. He suggested that attendance by members of the public and guests, such as representatives from Sustainable Sudbury or Sudbury TV, should be noted when possible.

Discussion clarified that:

- Zoom transcripts do not include attendee lists.
- The secretary may need to monitor the Zoom participant panel during meetings to record attendees.
- Tracking attendees may be challenging because people can join and leave during the meeting.

Overall, the committee established a structured and transparent process for creating, reviewing, approving, publishing, and tracking meeting minutes and related action items.

3. Open Meeting Law Complaint Discussion and Next Steps; COI Training

The committee discussed an official Open Meeting Law complaint received on June 4, 2026 by the Town Clerk, Town Manager, and the Energy and Sustainability Committee. The complaint concerned the lack of publicly available meeting minutes and specifically requested access to minutes from January through May.

Key points discussed included:

- **Response Requirements:** Under Massachusetts Open Meeting Law procedures, the committee has 14 business days to discuss and respond to the complaint. At the time of the meeting, eight business days had elapsed.
- **Planned Response:** Olga volunteered to prepare the formal response to both the complainant and the Attorney General's Office.
- **Posting of Minutes:** To address the complaint promptly, Olga requested that all approved meeting minutes be posted by the end of the week, ahead of the normal publication schedule. Eric agreed to post the minutes immediately upon receiving them.
- **Town Counsel Consultation:** John suggested consulting Town Counsel for guidance on the complaint process, noting that committee members are not attorneys. Olga agreed and committed to seeking legal review of the committee's response.
- **Question of Responsibility:** Venk noted that the complaint specifically named the former committee chair rather than the committee itself and recommended asking Town Counsel whether the complaint should be treated as directed toward an individual or the committee. Olga agreed to seek clarification on this issue.
- **Conflict of Interest (COI) Training:** Olga reminded members about the recently held Conflict of Interest training, which had been recorded. She requested that all committee members review the recording before the next meeting.
- **Open Meeting Law Training Suggestion:** John suggested that the town offer a similar training session on Open Meeting Law requirements, comparable to the recent COI training, to help committee members better understand their responsibilities.
- **Reference Materials:** John mentioned an Open Meeting Law handbook available online and agreed to circulate the PDF to committee members for reference.

Action Item: **Olga will prepare and submit the committee's response to the complainant and Attorney General.**

Action Item: **Olga will consult Town Counsel regarding the complaint and questions of responsibility.**

Action Item:

John will provide approved meeting minutes as PDFs for posting.

Action Item:

Eric will post the approved minutes upon receipt.

Action Item:

All committee members will review the recorded COI training before the next meeting.

Action Item:

John will circulate the Open Meeting Law handbook to committee members.

3. Election of Officers – Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary

The committee discussed formalizing its leadership structure and conducting elections for key officer positions. Olga explained that the committee had previously agreed to establish three officer roles—Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary—and proposed holding nominations and votes for those positions. John noted that the town handbook uses the title **Clerk** rather than **Secretary**, and the committee agreed to follow the handbook terminology.

The committee reviewed the proposed responsibilities and term limits for each position:

- **Chair:** Conduct meetings, set agendas, serve as the committee's public representative, and sign official correspondence. The position would be elected annually with a maximum of three consecutive terms.

- **Vice Chair/Treasurer:** Preside in the Chair's absence, assist with drafting documents and external representation, and conduct semiannual reviews of the Solar Revolving Fund. The position would also be elected annually with a three-term limit.
- **Clerk:** Prepare meeting minutes, maintain attendance records and document retention, ensure agendas and minutes comply with Open Meeting Law requirements, and manage meeting documentation. After discussion, the committee agreed this role would also have one-year terms with a maximum of three consecutive terms.

John confirmed that the proposed officer responsibilities were generally consistent with guidance in the town's board and committee handbook.

Election Results

Chair

- Mary Farris nominated Olga Faktorovich Allen.
- Venk Gopal seconded the nomination.
- The committee voted unanimously to elect **Olga Faktorovich Allen as Chair**.

Vice Chair/Treasurer

- John Keklak nominated Venk Gopal.
- Mary Farris seconded the nomination.
- Venk accepted the nomination but noted that international travel during several months of the year could limit his attendance at some meetings, though he remained willing to perform the responsibilities of the role.
- The committee voted unanimously to elect **Venk Gopal as Vice Chair/Treasurer**.

Clerk

- Venk Gopal nominated John Keklak.
- John jokingly remarked that by creating the meeting minutes process, he had effectively "worked himself into a job."
- The committee voted unanimously to elect **John Keklak as Clerk**.
- Joe Martino joined the meeting shortly afterward and added his affirmative vote, confirming unanimous support.

Officer Appointments

- **Chair:** Olga Faktorovich Allen
- **Vice Chair/Treasurer:** Venk Gopal
- **Clerk:** John Keklak

The committee concluded the agenda item with all three officer positions filled unanimously.

4. Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Contract Amendment

The committee discussed a request from consultant **Weston & Sampson** to amend its contract for Sudbury's Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment. The amendment would extend the project through October and add **$15,000** in funding: **$10,000** for incorporating newly acquired flood-modeling data from BSC Group and **$5,000** for additional project management and coordination.

Background

- The committee had previously approved spending **$6,250** to purchase inland flooding data from **BSC Group** because it offered more detailed and future-oriented climate flood projections than FEMA data.
- After receiving the data, running the analysis and reviewing the results,Weston & Sampson identified significant concerns with the data.
- Multiple meetings between BSC, Weston & Sampson, and town staff were required to resolve the issues.
- As a result, BSC ultimately provided higher-resolution **raster files**, originally priced at **$12,000**, even though the town had only purchased the lower-cost vector data.

Concerns Raised

John Keklak

- Questioned why the town should pay extra for problems caused by BSC's data delivery.
- Noted that Weston & Sampson had recommended purchasing the BSC data and should have understood what would be required to use it.
- Argued that if the data was unusable or incomplete, the additional cost should not automatically fall on the town.
- Ultimately voted against the funding request.

Mary Farris

- Felt the request appeared to be a "whiff," meaning the consultant performed work and incurred costs before seeking approval.
- Wanted a clearer explanation of what additional work had been performed and how many staff hours were involved.
- Asked what percentage increase the amendment represented relative to the original contract.
- Nevertheless supported funding part of the request after hearing the full explanation.

Venk Gopal

- Observed that problems with raster/vector data conversions and formatting are common in GIS and utility mapping work.
- Suggested the issue may have arisen from expectations about data quality rather than negligence.
- Requested better documentation and itemization of the additional costs.

Responses and Clarifications

Eric (Town Staff)

- Explained that Weston & Sampson had expected properly formatted vector data but received files that could not be mapped correctly.

- Said the problem stemmed from BSC's delivery and formatting of the data, not from Weston & Sampson requesting the wrong type of data.
- Confirmed that if the amendment were rejected, the vulnerability assessment would likely revert to using FEMA flood data instead of the more detailed BSC climate projections.

Olga Faktorovich Allen

- Emphasized the value of obtaining better flood data for town planning.
- Noted that Weston & Sampson had already spent significant time diagnosing data problems, coordinating with BSC, and rerunning analyses.
- Argued that incorporating the best available data into the final assessment was important for the town's long-term planning efforts.

Sandra Duran

- Reported that the original Weston & Sampson contract was **$59,970**.
- Commented that the requested $15,000 increase was substantial and suggested a smaller amount might be more appropriate.

Final Discussion and Vote

The committee sought a compromise:

- Members generally agreed that the additional technical work required to incorporate the BSC data deserved compensation.
- However, several members felt that the requested **$5,000 project management fee** should have been anticipated within normal project management responsibilities.

Motion/Vote:

The committee voted to recommend providing up to $10,000 from the Solar Revolving Fund toward the proposed contract amendment, to limit support to the technical work required to incorporate the BSC data, and to make the funding contingent upon the town formally amending the contract.

The wording of the motion by Mary: "Release up to $10,000 in support of the proposed amendment to the contract with Weston & Sampson to finish the climate risk assessment, incorporating the data from BSC, provided the contract is amended with the appropriate parties."

Seconded by Olga.

Vote Result:

Aye: Olga Faktorovich Allen, Mary Farris, Venk Gopal, Joe Martino
No: John Keklak

Outcome: Motion passed 4–1.

Follow-Up Actions

- Eric will inform Weston & Sampson of the committee's decision.
- The committee requested a more detailed breakdown of the additional costs, including:
    - Itemized tasks related to the data integration work.
    - Estimated person-hours and staffing effort.
    - Documentation connecting the requested costs to the specific data issues encountered.

5. Solar Revolving Fund – Financial Review

The committee briefly discussed the scheduled **Solar Revolving Fund Financial Review**, which had been placed on the agenda following discussion at the previous meeting.

Financial Review Postponed

- **Olga Faktorovich Allen** asked **Sandra Duran** for an update on whether the financial review information was available.
- Sandra explained that the staff member needed to provide the financial data was unavailable, preventing completion of the analysis in time for the meeting.
- She recommended postponing the review until the next meeting, when the necessary information should be available.
- The committee agreed to defer the Solar Revolving Fund financial review to the following month.

Request for Solar Revolving Fund Overview

- **Venk Gopal** suggested that the committee create a short written explanation of the Solar Revolving Fund.
- He noted that information about the fund is not easily accessible and that committee members would benefit from having a common understanding of:
    - The purpose of the fund.
    - How it operates.
    - What types of projects and expenditures it supports.
- Venk proposed a concise one-paragraph summary that could be shared among committee members and potentially posted for public reference.

Follow-Up Assignment

- Olga agreed that documenting the fund clearly would be valuable.
- She asked Venk, in his newly elected role as Vice Chair, to prepare an initial draft.
- Olga offered to review the draft and suggested that other stakeholders, including **Rami** and **Sandra**, could also provide input.
- The goal is to develop a clear, shared description of the Solar Revolving Fund for committee use and future reference.

Outcome

The Solar Revolving Fund financial review was postponed until the next meeting.

Action Item:

Venk will prepare a draft summary explaining the Solar Revolving Fund, with review and input from committee leadership and staff.

6. Resource Prioritization Criteria

The committee discussed developing a **transparent, quantitative rubric** for evaluating Solar Revolving Fund expenditures and prioritizing sustainability initiatives. Olga presented a draft framework intended to make funding decisions more consistent, objective, and defensible.

Proposed Evaluation Criteria

Projects would be scored on six criteria (initially proposed on a 1–5 scale):

1. **Mission Alignment** – Supports the committee's goals of climate mitigation, energy independence, and resilience.
2. **Quantified Impact** – Measurable benefits such as greenhouse gas reductions, energy generation, or resilience improvements.
3. **Cost Effectiveness** – Value achieved per dollar invested, such as cost savings or emissions reductions.
4. **Leverage** – Ability to attract grants, matching funds, incentives, or other outside resources.
5. **Reinvestment Potential** – Whether the project generates revenue or savings that can support future investments.
6. **Demonstration Value** – Visibility and replicability of the project for residents and other municipalities.

The committee would eventually consider scoring thresholds and eligibility requirements for funding.

Feedback on the Rubric

- **Mary Farris** strongly supported the framework but suggested using a **0–5 scale** rather than 1–5.
- She also proposed that **mission alignment be a mandatory requirement**: projects receiving a zero for mission alignment should automatically be ineligible for funding.
- **Venk Gopal** sought clarification on the distinction between "cost effectiveness" and "leverage." After discussion, leverage was defined as the degree to which committee funding unlocks additional resources such as grants or matching funds. Venk suggested that the terminology could be refined to make it clearer to the public.

Discussion on Funding Capital Equipment vs. Studies

Sandra raised a practical question regarding upcoming HVAC equipment replacements in town buildings. She asked whether Solar Revolving Fund resources could be used to help cover the additional cost of purchasing more energy-efficient equipment or related upgrades.

This led to a broader discussion about the proper role of the Solar Revolving Fund:

- **Sandra** suggested the fund could help the town achieve higher efficiency standards when capital replacement projects arise.
- **Mary Farris** supported using fund resources for implementation and equipment upgrades that go beyond standard replacements.
- **Olga** expressed caution, arguing that the Solar Revolving Fund should not become a general capital budget or a mechanism for closing municipal budget gaps. She suggested funding studies, analyses, and decision-support activities may align more closely with the committee's advisory role.
- **Olga** acknowledged that there is precedent for funding enhancements, such as higher-performance features that were removed during value engineering, but felt the committee should clearly define when such funding is appropriate.
- **Mary** emphasized that the committee has historically funded tangible improvements and should continue focusing on implementation rather than becoming solely advisory.

Importance of Leveraging External Funds

- **Eric** stressed the importance of using Solar Revolving Fund dollars strategically to attract grants and outside funding sources, thereby increasing the impact of committee investments.
- **Joe Martino** noted that the committee has frequently committed funds in the past to strengthen grant applications and demonstrate local commitment.

Next Steps

The committee agreed that further refinement is needed before adopting the rubric. Specifically:

- The committee will revisit the rubric alongside the postponed Solar Revolving Fund financial review at a future meeting.
- Members will also examine past funding decisions to better understand precedent and determine how prescriptive future funding criteria should be.

Key Themes

- Desire for a transparent and objective funding process.
- Need to clearly define the role of the Solar Revolving Fund.
- Balancing funding for studies, implementation projects, and capital improvements.
- Maximizing the impact of committee dollars through grants and leverage.
- Clarifying what constitutes an "above and beyond" sustainability investment worthy of support.

Action Item:

Olga, Venk, and Sandra will review the proposed criteria and spreadsheet together. They will develop clearer definitions, qualification guidelines, and examples.

7. Sustainability Coordinator Update

The committee received several updates from Eric and John regarding the town's sustainability and decarbonization efforts.

Decarbonization Roadmap Timeline

Olga asked about the June 30 grant deadline associated with the decarbonization roadmap. **John** reported that the deadline would not be met because, although he expects to have the necessary facility data collected by then, significant additional steps remain.

Eric explained that once the data is gathered, it must be sent to PowerOptions, which will need approximately four to five weeks to develop the roadmap. Afterward, the roadmap must be reviewed and approved by the Select Board and both school districts before the grant application can be completed. The committee is now targeting the December deadline and expects to submit the application well before then.

Olga thanked John and Sandra for their work collecting facility data and asked to be informed of any obstacles that could affect the December timeline.

Other Sustainability Initiatives

Eric provided updates on several ongoing projects:

- The town is continuing discussions with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regarding a regional waste management coordinator position that would be based in Sudbury. The position is expected to be filled in July and would be located in town at least one day per week.
- **Eric** and **Venk** have begun discussions with the Building Department and Fire Department regarding battery energy storage systems and potential updates to local solar bylaws to include battery storage. Initial conversations have been productive, and additional stakeholder outreach is planned.
- The MVP 2.0 Climate Resilience Coaching Project has received an extension into the fall. Coaches will conduct pilot activities during the summer using materials already developed.

Electric School Bus Exploration

A significant portion of the discussion focused on the possibility of incorporating electric buses into the upcoming school transportation contract.

Eric reported that discussions have begun among the Lincoln-Sudbury School District, the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC), and bus companies regarding the inclusion of electric buses in the next school bus Request for Proposals (RFP). While no decisions have been made, the conversations have been encouraging.

Olga asked whether electric buses would carry a cost premium and noted that neighboring communities such as Concord have already adopted electric buses.

Eric explained that Concord owns its buses, whereas Sudbury currently uses a leasing model. The town is exploring whether electric buses could be incorporated into a future leased transportation contract. Discussions have been held with Highland Electric Fleets, a company active in school bus electrification in Massachusetts, and other regional partners.

Eric also noted that Sudbury may qualify for free technical assistance through a MassCEC-supported Electric Bus Fleet Advisory Services program. If accepted, the town could receive approximately $50,000 worth of consulting services at no cost, including a roadmap and implementation plan for electrifying the school bus fleet.

Coordination with Facilities Planning

Sandra reported that she has already been investigating the feasibility of electric bus charging infrastructure for several months. Eversource has reviewed the site and determined that the bus depot has sufficient electrical capacity to support electric buses.

However, Sandra noted that important technical questions remain, including battery sizing, charging requirements, and overnight charging capacity. Because the school transportation RFP is scheduled for release in September, she emphasized the need to gather this information quickly.

Sandra and **Eric** agreed to coordinate their efforts offline and share information. Olga stressed the importance of the issue and requested that electric school buses be placed on the agenda for the next committee meeting so the committee can better understand the opportunity and determine how it might assist.

Eric concluded by noting that one proposal under consideration would provide an all-inclusive service model that includes both the buses and charging infrastructure.

Key Outcomes

- The June 30 decarbonization grant deadline will not be met; focus shifts to the December deadline.
- Data collection for the decarbonization roadmap is progressing.
- Work continues on battery storage bylaws, waste management coordination, and climate resilience planning.
- The committee expressed strong interest in exploring electric school buses.
- Sudbury may receive free technical assistance to develop a school bus electrification plan.

Action Item:

Eric and Sandra will coordinate efforts and provide a more detailed update on electric school buses at the next committee meeting.

8. Combined Facilities Director Update

Sandra Duran, Combined Facilities Director, reported that her present work is focused on advancing several solar projects. Key fieldwork activities—ground-penetrating radar and geotechnical investigations—are scheduled for July and August.

She is currently collecting any available "as-built" documentation and utility plans for all three project parcels, having already received some responses from various departments after sending a request for information.

She also noted that the Haskell Field parking lot will need to be closed in sections during the late July–August work period due to the size of the site, and she plans to share a more detailed closure plan through Parks and Recreation.

Sandra Duran added that she will socialize the plan once finalized. Olga Faktorovich Allen responded positively, expressing enthusiasm about the update and appreciation for the information.

9. ESC Recruitment Strategy

Olga Faktorovich Allen noted that recruitment efforts are going well, crediting Venk Gopal for doing a strong job bringing in candidates. She mentioned there may be a new applicant ready to be interviewed and possibly voted on at the next meeting.

She also reminded the group that the committee has 9 seats but only 6 are currently filled, so there is still capacity for additional members and encouraged outreach to potential recruits.

Venk Gopal added that the prospective candidate has already submitted an application to the Select Board.

10. Other items

John Keklak reported on a successful Fix-It Clinic held at Goodnow Library on Saturday, highlighting strong attendance (about 30 people) and a good balance between attendees and repair volunteers, which helped the event run smoothly without issues.

He credited **Sustainable Sudbury** for their key role in making the event a success and noted that they also enjoyed participating.

Based on positive feedback, another Fix-It Clinic is planned for October, with discussion indicating a longer-term goal of holding the event up to four times per year. Olga Faktorovich

Allen expressed enthusiasm and support for the program and praised Sustainable Sudbury's contributions.

9. Next Meeting

ESC members agreed to hold the next monthly meeting on July 14, 2026.

Conclusion of Meeting

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:19pm.

Submitted by: John Keklak