Town of Sudbury
Energy and Sustainability Committee (ESC)
Minutes – August 18, 2026

Present in person: None

Present remotely: Olga Faktorovich Allen, Chair; Jennifer Dudgeon, Member; Joe Martino, Member.

Absent: Venk Gopal, Vice Chair; John Keklak, Clerk; Mary K. Farris, Member.

Also Present remotely: Blair Stewart, ESC appointee; Sandra Duran, Combined Facilities Director; Eric Simms, Sustainability Coordinator; Lynn Puorro, Sudbury TV staff; Leslie Lowe, Sustainable Sudbury; Tom Felton, Sustainable Sudbury; Charles Reed.

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1. Call to Order

A roll call having been taken, the meeting was called to order at approximately 5:30pm by Chair **Olga Faktorovich Allen**. As a quorum was not present, votes would not be taken on any matter.

2. Approval of Minutes of July 2026 ESC Meeting

Approval of the July 2026 minutes was deferred to a future meeting when a quorum is present.

3. Update on Follow-Up Actions from the July 2026 ESC Meeting

The committee reviewed four follow-up action items from the July meeting.

Sandra had completed the first item by preparing and distributing a spreadsheet containing financial data for the Solar Revolving Fund, which would be discussed later in the meeting and was expected to generate additional follow-up actions.

Progress on the second item—an analysis of financial data related to EV charging by **Eric**, **Sandra**, and **John**—was continuing, although slowly. **Sandra** had provided John with some of the necessary data, and **Eric** indicated that the available information could serve as a starting point once he and John were able to coordinate and review it. The committee agreed to revisit this item at a future meeting.

Action Item:

Eric and John will review EV charging data.

The remaining two action items, concerning a draft memorandum and letter of commitment for school bus electrification and a presentation summarizing stakeholder feedback on the BSS law, were both underway and would be addressed as part of the respective upcoming coordinator updates.

Overall, the committee concluded that the action items were in good shape.

4. Sustainability Coordinator Update

Eric Simms, the Sustainability Coordinator, provided updates on a broad range of ongoing sustainability initiatives.

The Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Hazard Mitigation Plan are continuing under an extended contract with Weston & Sampson, including the additional $10,000 previously approved by the committee. Weston & Sampson is continuing its work on inland flooding data and the hazard mitigation component, with upcoming meetings of the town's core team to review questions, provide departmental input, and discuss draft materials. The overall goal remains to complete the work by October. **Olga** noted, however, that the timeline is becoming tight because public engagement will need to occur in two stages: first to help prioritize recommended actions and later to share the final results. **Eric** agreed to follow up with Weston & Sampson to obtain a revised timeline and to clarify the schedule for public engagement. He will also work to schedule the consultants' presentation to the ESC, preferably as part of a regular September meeting rather than requiring a special meeting. **Eric** confirmed that Weston & Sampson accepted the $10,000 contract extension without requesting additional funding.

Eric also reported on efforts to develop a battery energy storage system bylaw. The initiative is being led jointly with Venk and involves consultation with the Planning Board, Fire Department, Building Department, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, Sudbury Water District, and other stakeholders. The Planning Board was generally supportive and offered suggestions for additional provisions, while the Water District was expected to discuss the proposal at its September 1 meeting. The Fire Department has been actively engaged and has emphasized the need for appropriate safety requirements, particularly for larger-scale installations. Potential provisions include financial assurances, such as bonding, to ensure that future disposal costs do not become the town's responsibility, as well as measures to ensure that emergency responders can address battery-storage incidents safely. **Eric** explained that smaller residential systems are already substantially covered by existing state and fire regulations, while larger commercial-scale installations will require closer consideration. The group also plans to review Sudbury's existing solar zoning language to determine whether updates are needed so that it aligns appropriately with the new storage bylaw. The goal is to develop a thoroughly vetted draft by January so that it can proceed through the necessary process for consideration at Town Meeting.

Eric also discussed a new state fee structure intended to reduce barriers to small-scale solar and storage projects. Rather than requiring individual applicants to bear potentially substantial costs when local electrical infrastructure requires upgrades, the new approach uses a standardized fee to distribute infrastructure costs more broadly. **Olga** emphasized that this was important information to communicate to the public. **Eric** had already shared the information with relevant town departments and Sustainable Sudbury, but had not yet undertaken broader public outreach. He agreed that the town should explore additional communication channels, including the municipal website and social media.

Relatedly, **Eric** reported that he has begun working with the town's communications director to establish a more visible sustainability presence on the municipal website. Although the town expects to migrate from its current WordPress platform to CivicPlus within the next six to twelve months, **Eric** believes there is an opportunity to begin adding sustainability content immediately. He has also been consulting with a recent computer science graduate who has been researching how other municipalities organize sustainability information online. Their short-term goal is to develop an organizational map or wireframe for sustainability-related web content, which could help shape a more comprehensive sustainability presence as the new website platform is implemented.

On school bus electrification, **Eric** reported that the consultants are ready to proceed, but the project is awaiting signed letters of commitment from both school districts. The Sudbury Public Schools committee has already voted on the matter, while **Eric** was awaiting further action from the Lincoln-Sudbury side, which may need to bring the matter before its committee before signing. **Eric** is continuing to follow up in hopes of completing this administrative step quickly so that the consultants can begin their work.

Among his other updates, **Eric** reported that the Locally Grown Sudbury grant has been fully completed for the year, including the required deliverable and financial reporting, and that the town's reimbursement request has been accepted. The Climate Resilience Coaching pilot is also underway, with pilot coaches testing the program's materials and conducting resilience assessments with a small number of community members. The group will reconvene in September to gather feedback, with the goal of completing the pilot by October.

Eric reported progress on a sustainability project tracker requested by the committee. He has been adapting a template created by his predecessor, reorganizing it to provide a broader overview of sustainability projects rather than focusing primarily on building-related work, and expects to have a draft to share with the committee soon. He also noted that Venk had completed a PowerPoint presentation describing the battery storage bylaw effort. Rather than reviewing it during the meeting, **Eric** agreed to distribute both the presentation and the draft bylaw language to committee members for review.

Action Item:

Eric will distribute to the committee the PowerPoint and draft language related to the proposed battery storage bylaw.

Lastly, **Eric** provided an additional update on the DEP Municipal Assistance Coordinator position that will be hosted in Sudbury. An offer had been made to a candidate that day, and, pending acceptance, DEP was interested in moving quickly to complete the hiring and onboarding process. **Eric** reported that the town was working with HR and DEP to have the new coordinator in place as soon as possible.

Olga asked whether the position could assist the committee with priorities related to waste management, including the possibility of a single-hauler system. **Eric** confirmed that the coordinator's responsibilities would include issues involving solid waste, recycling, composting, and other waste-related programs. He noted that the new coordinator would first need time to become familiar with DEP programs and procedures, but he intended to compile the various waste-management concerns and ideas that had emerged from town and committee discussions so that these priorities could be presented to the coordinator and addressed as soon as practicable.

5. Combined Facilities Director Update

Sandra Duran, Combined Facilities Director, provided updates on several facilities, solar, and school infrastructure initiatives. She noted that the decarbonization roadmap data remains outstanding but that the relevant staff members are coordinating to move the work forward following a particularly busy summer.

On the town's solar projects, **Sandra** reported that geotechnical investigations at the Police Station, Haskell Field, and Curtis have been completed. The consultants will now analyze the drilling data and prepare reports, after which Solect Energy and the town will conduct internal reviews before releasing information publicly. **Sandra** does not expect to have design information before October and suggested that the geotechnical results may not be available until October or November. Despite these timing considerations, the projects are still targeting a 2027 construction timeframe. Additional permitting, including stormwater permitting, will also be required. **Sandra** has met with Eversource regarding the location of electrical equipment at the Police Station site, with the equipment planned for the paved parking area rather than grassy land in order to accommodate the site's constraints, including those associated with Article 97. At Haskell Field, the geotechnical drilling extended to approximately 40 feet and identified solid soils, although bedrock was not reached.

Sandra also reported an opportunity to prepare portions of the Haynes and Nixon school roofs for future solar installations as part of ongoing roofing projects. Haynes is receiving a complete roof replacement, while the older portion of Nixon is being reroofed through an MSBA-supported project. Although structural limitations prevent solar panels from being installed across the entire roofs, structural reinforcement and steel dunnage are being added in selected areas, primarily over corridors, to support future solar arrays. Electrical conduits are also being brought through and flashed into the new roofs so that future solar installations can be connected without reopening the roofing system. The town is working with Solect Energy to evaluate possible solar configurations and financial arrangements, with the objective of allowing the schools to offset some of their electricity costs while ensuring that any future project provides an acceptable return on investment.

A major portion of **Sandra**'s update concerned the recently completed HVAC and electrification studies covering all five Sudbury schools. An engineering firm conducted a detailed existing-conditions assessment that went significantly beyond the earlier facility condition assessment and also prepared a draft electrification study. The preliminary findings indicate that simply replacing rooftop or other end-use equipment with electric systems may not be practical because much of the infrastructure between the central equipment and the classrooms—including controls, electrical systems, piping, and other distribution equipment—is also old and deteriorated. Meaningful electrification could therefore require extensive replacement of this underlying infrastructure, potentially involving major renovations that would be difficult to accomplish while the schools remain operational.

Sandra emphasized that these findings raise broader questions about the long-term future of the school facilities. The town faces the challenge of maintaining and replacing aging equipment while also pursuing its climate and decarbonization goals. In some cases, the most immediately necessary and affordable replacement may not represent the ideal long-term electrification or carbon-reduction solution. Decisions will therefore need to balance capital costs, operational needs, carbon impacts, building conditions, and the possibility of more extensive renovations or even new school construction in the future. The HVAC and electrification findings will eventually need to be considered alongside the facility condition assessment, the town's long-range capital plan, available incentives, and the community's broader goals for its school infrastructure. **Sandra** suggested that the committee take a deeper look at the electrification study early next year, when there would be sufficient time for a more comprehensive discussion.

Olga agreed that the issue requires strategic, long-term planning, particularly given the town's climate goals extending toward 2050. She also emphasized that resilience and student health should be part of the discussion, noting the importance of maintaining healthy and comfortable learning environments as extreme heat becomes more common. **Sandra** agreed that long-term planning is essential, while acknowledging the immediate reality that the town must prioritize among numerous aging systems and make difficult capital investment decisions. Overall, the discussion highlighted the need to coordinate facilities planning, school infrastructure renewal, electrification, climate goals, resilience, public health, and financial constraints as part of a larger community-wide planning process.

6. Solar Revolving Fund Review and Categorization Discussion

The committee began its discussion of the Solar Revolving Fund by reviewing **Sandra**’s financial data and clarifying that a more detailed financial review would be deferred to a future meeting. **Olga** noted that Venk, in his role as Vice Chair and Treasurer, had been designated to lead a review of the fund every six months. She and **Sandra** also planned to meet separately to clarify some of the underlying data. One question concerned the Pelle Verde solar contract, particularly its commercial operation date and the timing of SREC revenue sharing, which **Olga** believed begins in year 11 of the 20-year agreement. Based on her preliminary reading of the records, she did not see SREC revenue-sharing deposits in the fund and wanted to verify whether this reflected a misunderstanding of the data or an issue requiring further investigation. **Sandra** agreed to look into the commercial operation date, and **Joe** Martino confirmed his understanding that the current Pelle Verde entity had simply acquired the existing contract rather than starting a new 20-year term.

For the immediate discussion, **Olga** presented a high-level analysis of Solar Revolving Fund expenditures from approximately fiscal years 2017 through 2026. Her preliminary categorization showed that about 61 percent of spending had gone toward contractual costs for solar power, followed by approximately 13 percent for EV charging, 8 percent for lighting efficiency, and smaller amounts for automation and HVAC controls and electric vehicles. She emphasized that these figures were intended as proportional estimates rather than a precise financial analysis, but they illustrated that the fund had been used predominantly for energy-related investments.

The main focus then shifted to developing criteria for prioritizing future uses of the fund. **Olga** proposed beginning with a threshold question: whether a proposed expenditure aligns with the committee's mission and with the statutory and bylaw requirements governing the Solar Revolving Fund. If it does not meet that basic test, it would not be considered for funding. Projects that passed this initial screen could then be evaluated according to factors such as impact, cost-effectiveness, the ability to leverage grants or other outside resources, potential to generate revenue or create avoided costs, and qualitative value, such as serving as a replicable model or pilot for other municipalities.

Jennifer suggested that the committee establish clearer guidance for scoring projects, including illustrative definitions of what low and high scores would represent. While members did not want to create an overly complicated system, they agreed that some guardrails would help reduce subjectivity and make the process more transparent to the community. **Olga** suggested that the next step would be to define the considerations underlying each criterion and provide examples or boundaries for how projects should be evaluated.

Sandra raised a concern about the use of the term "quantified impact," explaining that requiring detailed energy studies for every proposed project would be impractical and expensive. In many cases, facilities staff receive only equipment specifications and must make relatively routine decisions, such as whether Solar Revolving Fund resources could help pay for a more efficient boiler or air handler. **Olga** agreed that the level of analysis should depend on the scale of the investment. A major capital project might justify a comprehensive energy study, whereas an individual equipment replacement should instead rely on reasonable assumptions, specifications, calculators, or estimates of projected energy and emissions impacts. The group consequently discussed replacing "quantified impact" with a concept such as "impact potential," supported by practical guardrails rather than requiring extensive studies in every case.

Jennifer also observed that some of the proposed criteria, particularly cost-effectiveness and reinvestment potential, appeared to overlap and might need to be refined or combined. The committee further discussed incorporating community benefit and equity considerations, including how many residents would benefit and whether a project would particularly serve populations that could be disproportionately affected, such as elderly residents, young people, or other vulnerable groups. Members agreed that these qualitative considerations should be explicitly defined even if they could not be reduced to a precise formula.

Another question concerned the role of leveraging outside funds. **Jennifer** cautioned that a worthwhile project should not necessarily be disadvantaged simply because grants or matching funds were unavailable. **Olga** agreed that the committee would need to test how the scoring system worked in practice and establish thresholds so that a low score in one category would not automatically disqualify a project with strong performance in other areas. She envisioned a two-stage process in which projects would first undergo an initial screening and scoring, with proposals exceeding a threshold receiving more detailed consideration. The goal, she said, was to create enough structure to support consistent decision-making without overengineering the process.

As a next step, **Olga** asked for volunteers to help revise the framework and develop the detailed sub-points and guidance for each criterion. **Jennifer** volunteered to take on the work, with **Blair** offering to assist. **Blair** also suggested considering a four-point scale rather than a five-point scale, reasoning that removing the middle option could encourage evaluators to make clearer distinctions. **Olga** asked **Jennifer** and **Blair** to draw on the committee's existing objectives and definitions when refining the criteria, particularly the concept of impact potential. The revised framework would then be brought back to the full committee for further discussion.

Action Item:

Jennifer and Blair will revise the criteria for prioritizing use of the solar revolving fund, and will develop detailed sub-points and guidance for each criterion.

7. MassEnergize Community Connections Proposed Upgrade

Leslie Lowe of Sustainable Sudbury presented a request for the ESC Committee to fund a $750-per-year MassEnergize “Community Connections with Social Media Magic” membership, intended to expand Sustainable Sudbury’s ability to engage residents on climate and sustainability topics.

Sustainable Sudbury, an all-volunteer organization founded in 1990, described its extensive community activities, including Styrofoam collections, composting education, support for single-hauler trash collection, waste collection at community events, the Fix-It Clinic, an annual climate-related scholarship, and ongoing support for the ESC Committee. **Leslie** noted that the organization currently reaches residents primarily through its website, event tabling, occasional mailings, and a relatively small mailing list of about 300 people.

For the past two years, Sustainable Sudbury and the Town have participated in MassEnergize’s Plug In for Resilience program, which provides free monthly educational webinars on topics such as heat pumps, solar, induction cooking, EVs, and heat-pump water heaters. MassEnergize provides the webinar content, speakers, graphics, and recordings, while Sustainable Sudbury and the Town help promote the events. **Leslie** said the experience had taught the group how to promote sustainability information, but that the organization now wanted more effective and consistent ways to reach residents.

The proposed Community Connections with Social Media Magic membership would provide Sustainable Sudbury with access to MassEnergize community-of-practice meetings, Slack channels and support, a community-leader Facebook group, a resource center, early conference access, and a social-media toolkit including Canva Pro for two users. It would also provide a library of ready-to-use social-media posts, distributed weekly, covering timely topics such as extreme heat and flooding. **Leslie** said the tools could help promote upcoming activities such as the Wayland energy-advice pizza event, the September Fix-It Clinic, the October Styrofoam collection, and planned fall home-energy tours featuring residents' heat pumps, geothermal systems, efficient water heaters, and other improvements.

Leslie emphasized that the membership was intended not merely to advertise Sustainable Sudbury events, but also to build an ongoing educational resource for residents. She described frequent questions from residents about composting, heating, induction cooking, heat-pump appliances, EVs, and other technologies. A stronger communications infrastructure would allow Sustainable Sudbury to provide useful information proactively and help residents become familiar with climate solutions before they need to replace equipment in their homes. She also mentioned possible future demonstrations, such as an “EV petting zoo” or a public demonstration of electric lawn equipment.

The $750 annual cost would be based on Sudbury's number of households. **Leslie** proposed that the ESC Committee provide the funding on an ongoing basis, while Sustainable Sudbury would contribute three volunteers—Leslie, Tom, and Jamie—to operate and maintain the program, including managing its content. She explained that the proposed membership was the middle of MassEnergize's service tiers; a higher-priced tier would additionally provide newsletter services.

Committee members asked about the broader MassEnergize network and the specific benefit to Sudbury residents. **Leslie** identified numerous participating communities, including Acton, Framingham, Natick, Wayland, Ashland, Westborough, and others, with an even broader MassEnergize membership extending into other Massachusetts communities and Vermont. She also clarified that the proposed social-media tools would support platforms including Instagram and Facebook, with possibly Bluesky as well.

A significant part of the discussion concerned how the $750 investment would translate into measurable benefits for Sudbury residents. **Joe** Martino wanted more clarity about what the membership itself would add beyond the activities Sustainable Sudbury already conducts. **Leslie** explained that MassEnergize would supply professionally prepared graphics, promotional materials, speakers, resources, and other content, reducing the need for Sustainable Sudbury to develop everything itself. The committee nevertheless asked that these benefits, along with expected audience reach and potential impact, be documented.

Olga noted that the committee's newly refined vision explicitly identifies meaningful resident engagement as a priority, making the proposal relevant to the committee's broader objectives. However, because the committee did not have a quorum, it could not vote on the request at this meeting. Instead, **Olga** proposed using the Sustainable Sudbury request as a pilot test case for the committee's new funding criteria.

Jennifer agreed that the proposal should be evaluated through those criteria but emphasized the need for a written proposal rather than relying on the meeting discussion. The committee asked Sustainable Sudbury to document:

- What the $750 membership provides, particularly the incremental benefits beyond Sustainable Sudbury's existing outreach.
- The level of support and work Sustainable Sudbury would provide.
- The anticipated reach—for example, the number or percentage of Sudbury residents potentially engaged.
- Any available quantitative evidence of impact.
- Evidence of the platform's effectiveness in other participating communities, which **Jennifer** suggested MassEnergize might be able to provide.
- How the investment would specifically benefit Sudbury residents, rather than simply benefiting Sustainable Sudbury or the ESC Committee.

Olga said she would provide **Leslie** with the committee's funding-criteria framework. Sustainable Sudbury would then submit a written proposal addressing those criteria. **Jennifer** and **Blair** would review it against the criteria, and the committee would revisit the request at a subsequent meeting—hopefully with a quorum—and potentially vote on the funding.

Overall, the discussion was supportive of exploring the proposal but did not constitute an approval. The immediate next step was to obtain a more formal, evidence-based proposal from Sustainable Sudbury so that the committee could evaluate the request systematically and determine whether it meets its emerging funding criteria.

Action Item:

Olga will provide Sustainable Sudbury with the ESC funding-criteria framework.

Action Item:

Sustainable Sudbury will provide ESC with a written proposal for funding a MassEnergize "Community Connections with Social Media Magic" membership.

Action Item:

Jennifer and Blair will score the Sustainable Sudbury proposal against the ESC funding-criteria framework.

8. ESC Mission & Strategy

Olga briefly reviewed the committee's mission and purpose statement, which has been substantially revisited as part of the committee's strategic work over the past eight months, beginning with the November strategy retreat.

She explained that because the ESC Committee was established by and serves under the Select Board, the committee's revised strategy, objectives, purpose, and mission ultimately need Select Board approval. **Olga** therefore took the committee's original 2009 mission statement and prepared a redlined version incorporating the changes developed through the committee's recent discussions. John and Venk had already provided feedback, which **Olga** incorporated into the current draft.

Olga will resend the updated draft to all committee members. She asked members to review it carefully, and either confirm that they are comfortable with the wording or provide comments and track changes by email. The goal is to ensure that the entire committee is comfortable with the proposed language before it is presented to the Select Board for consideration and a vote.

Joe asked whether this was the same draft previously circulated. **Olga** clarified that it was an updated version incorporating John's and Venk's suggestions and would be redistributed for another round of review.

Next step: Committee members are to review the revised mission/purpose statement and either approve it informally or provide feedback before it is forwarded to the Select Board.

Action Item: **Committee members are to review the revised mission/purpose statement and either approve it informally or provide feedback.**

9. Next Meeting

ESC members agreed to hold the next monthly meeting on Tuesday, September 8, 2026.

10. Conclusion of Meeting

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

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7pm.

Submitted by: John Keklak