Town of Sudbury
Energy and Sustainability Committee (ESC)
Minutes – July 14, 2026

Present in person: None

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

Absent: Jennifer Dudgeon, Member.

Also Present remotely: Sandra Duran, Combined Facilities Director; Eric Simms, Sustainability Coordinator; Lynn Puorro, Sudbury TV staff; Jamie Simione, Sustainable Sudbury; Leslie Lowe, Sustainable Sudbury; Tom Felton, Sustainable Sudbury; Blair Stewart, applicant for ESC membership.

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1. Call to Order

A roll call having been taken and a quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 5:32pm by Chair **Olga Faktorovich Allen**.

2. Approval of Minutes of June 2026 ESC Meeting

Motion/Vote:

Motion by Olga to approve minutes as amended for the meeting of June 16, 2026. Seconded by Mary.

Vote: 5–0.

3. Interview of Applicant Blair Stewart for ESC Membership

The committee interviewed **Blair Stewart** as a candidate for appointment to the Sudbury Energy and Sustainability Committee.

Olga began by introducing the committee, summarizing its mission, accomplishments, and recently refined strategic direction. She described the committee's focus on climate action, energy independence, resilience, responsible financial stewardship, and measurable progress through clearly defined objectives and accountability.

Committee members and staff introduced themselves and described their professional backgrounds and roles.

Blair then provided an overview of his own background, noting more than 40 years of experience in electrical engineering, information technology, consulting, and strategic business development. Originally from New Zealand, he has lived in Sudbury since 2013 and currently leads strategic sales for a global technology company. He described previous work involving sustainability initiatives, including projects related to greenhouse gas accounting and supply chain traceability.

Blair explained that he is interested in joining the committee both to contribute his professional experience and to deepen his own understanding of clean energy and sustainability. He highlighted experience in stakeholder engagement, strategic planning, funding partnerships, data analysis, artificial intelligence, and communications. He expressed particular interest in helping the committee strengthen outreach, clearly communicate the value of sustainability initiatives, and engage businesses and residents.

Committee members discussed Blair's experience working with diverse stakeholders, his work supporting sustainability efforts for large organizations, and his familiarity with data-driven decision making. **Blair** described a project supporting McDonald's efforts to better understand greenhouse gas emissions throughout its beef supply chain by improving data collection, traceability, and emissions modeling.

When asked which committee activities most interested him, **Blair** said he was particularly interested in municipal and residential solar initiatives, understanding the economics of residential solar installations, and helping communicate the benefits of renewable energy to residents. He also expressed interest in contributing to strategic planning, performance metrics, and community engagement.

Committee members emphasized that the committee is a hands-on working committee, with members expected to take leadership roles on projects between monthly meetings. **Eric** offered to meet with Blair to provide additional background on the town's ongoing sustainability initiatives should he be appointed.

Following the interview, the committee voted unanimously to recommend **Blair Stewart** to the Select Board for appointment to the Energy and Sustainability Committee, subject to the Select Board's interview and confirmation process. **Blair** thanked the committee for the opportunity and expressed his enthusiasm for contributing to the committee's work.

Motion/Vote:

Motion by Olga to approve recommending Blair Stewart to the Select Board for appointment to ESC subject to the Select Board interview and confirmation. Seconded by John.

Vote: 5–0.

4. Update on Follow-Up Actions from the June 2026 ESC Meeting

Olga reviewed action items from the previous meeting and reported substantial progress.

The committee completed several administrative tasks. **John** converted the previously approved January–May meeting minutes into the required format, and **Eric** posted them to the committee website, bringing the committee's published minutes fully up to date. **Olga** also reported that she had prepared and submitted the committee's response to the Attorney General regarding the Open Meeting Law complaint. After consulting with the Town Manager, who advised that consultation with Town Counsel was unnecessary, **Olga** considered the matter resolved. Members were reminded to complete the Conflict of Interest training and to review the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law Handbook previously circulated.

The committee then discussed follow-up work related to the Solar Revolving Fund. **Venk** had prepared a draft summary describing the fund and its history. However, the committee had not yet received the official financial records needed to review expenditures and reconcile them against proposed funding criteria because town staff were completing the FY2026 financial close. **Sandra** reported that the official accounting report should be available by the end of July or, at the latest, the first week of August.

Given the absence of the official financial data, **Olga** recommended postponing discussion of both the Solar Revolving Fund criteria and the planned presentation to the Select Board regarding revisions to the committee's mission and governing documents. She explained that these topics should be considered together after the committee has reviewed the complete financial record and developed a synthesis of how the fund has historically been used, rather than simply reviewing individual transactions.

Sandra agreed that the Solar Revolving Fund report would provide the committee with a single authoritative financial record and supported distributing it to all committee members as soon as it became available. Members discussed providing the documents sufficiently in advance of the next meeting to allow time for review. **Mary** suggested using a shared online document repository to facilitate collaborative review, while **Sandra** noted that the town's existing systems may instead require distributing documents by email or through Dropbox or the committee website.

Sandra expressed enthusiasm for establishing formal funding criteria, noting that clearer guidance would help direct Solar Revolving Fund resources toward energy conservation and sustainability projects that produce long-term benefits for the town. The committee agreed to defer further discussion until the official financial information becomes available.

John raised two additional topics for future committee consideration.

First, he noted that the committee's draft meeting minutes are currently maintained in his personal Google Drive during the review process. To improve continuity when committee officers change, he suggested establishing a town-managed shared workspace for working documents so future clerks would have a central location for draft materials. **Olga** clarified that Google Drive is currently used only for collaborative editing of draft minutes, after which approved minutes are converted to PDF and posted to the committee website. **Sandra** agreed that a shared file repository for working documents could be explored.

John also requested that the committee review data on the town's public electric vehicle charging stations, including charger utilization, operating costs, and revenue. He noted that the committee had discussed the topic previously but had not yet reviewed actual operating data.

Sandra explained that the EV charging fees were originally established to recover the town's costs, including electricity, demand charges, transmission costs, software, and maintenance contracts, rather than to generate revenue. She reported that sufficient operational data have now been collected to evaluate whether the current charging rates remain appropriate. The charging network provides downloadable reports showing usage, and the town can calculate electricity costs using individual meters or building energy data where dedicated meters are not available.

Olga recommended scheduling a future agenda item to review the EV charging program. **Sandra** offered to provide the operational and financial data, and **Eric** volunteered to work with **John** to analyze the information and present the findings to the committee. **Sandra** also suggested that the EV charging program could serve as an introductory project for Blair Stewart if he joins the committee, given his interest in electric vehicles and sustainability.

Action Item:

Sandra will prepare Solar Revolving Fund financial data, and will distribute said data to ESC members prior to the next meeting.

Action Item:

Eric, Sandra and John will obtain and analyze EV charging financial data in preparation for presentation to ESC.

5. Combined Facilities Director Update

Combined Facilities Director **Sandra Duran** reported that the town's three solar canopy projects continue to make steady progress, with the Haskell Field project serving as the primary focus of the update.

Sandra reported that Eversource continues engineering work related to the electrical equipment and transformer requirements. Ground markings for the upcoming ground-penetrating radar and geotechnical investigations were completed at all three project sites on July 2. Geotechnical drilling at Haskell Field is scheduled for August 10–14, during which only portions of the parking lot will be temporarily closed in sequence to minimize disruption. The playground and other unaffected parking areas will remain open, and all construction activities and electrical equipment will remain on paved surfaces rather than the athletic fields.

She explained that the Haskell Field project will require a Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals, Site Plan Review by the Planning Board, and likely a General Stormwater Permit. Results from the geotechnical investigation will be used to design the canopy foundations before the project advances into detailed engineering and permitting.

Sandra presented a site map showing the proposed canopy locations and the phased parking lot closures for geotechnical testing. She noted that the map would be shared publicly after her presentation to the Park and Recreation Commission. During the review, **John** pointed out a typographical error on the map, which Sandra agreed to correct before publication.

In response to committee questions, **Sandra** explained that geotechnical results will determine whether foundation requirements affect project costs. Additional design elements, such as stormwater management or aesthetic enhancements, could also increase construction costs and ultimately affect the town's electricity price under the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). She expects a clearer understanding of those impacts later this year as engineering progresses, with construction anticipated to begin next summer.

The committee discussed how design decisions, particularly aesthetics, will be evaluated. **Sandra** explained that although Solect Energy owns and develops the solar projects under the lease agreement, the town will have opportunities to provide input throughout the design and permitting process. Public feedback will be gathered through meetings of the Energy and Sustainability Committee, Park and Recreation Commission, Select Board, School Committee, and other public forums, as well as through direct communication with the Facilities Department. Committee members emphasized the importance of balancing attractive design with maintaining the favorable PPA pricing negotiated by the town.

Venk requested a high-level project schedule identifying key milestones, deliverables, and permitting dates so the committee can better track project progress. **Sandra** agreed that such a schedule would be useful and said she would work with the project team to prepare one. **Olga** also suggested adding the solar projects as a standing agenda item so the committee can receive regular progress reports, particularly for the Haskell Field project.

Sandra concluded by noting that the Curtis Middle School and Police Station solar canopy projects are following essentially the same schedule as Haskell Field. Site markings have been completed, geotechnical work is about to begin, and no significant issues have arisen on either project.

6. School Bus Electrification Plan

Eric reported on progress toward electrifying Sudbury's school bus fleet through a **MassCEC School Bus Advisory Program**. Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School has agreed to participate, but Sudbury Public Schools (SPS) has not yet approved participation because its previous School Committee meeting was canceled due to technical issues. The proposal was rescheduled for the next School Committee meeting, where Eric hoped the committee and acting superintendent would authorize a letter of commitment.

Eric emphasized that participation in the advisory program carries no cost or obligation. If approved, MassCEC would develop a comprehensive electric school bus transition plan for the town, including fleet planning and recommendations. To minimize the workload on the schools, **Eric** offered to serve as project manager, coordinating data collection and communication among stakeholders.

Sandra noted that she had independently begun examining the infrastructure side of the project, particularly the feasibility of installing charging facilities at the school bus depot. **Eric** acknowledged that their efforts had been proceeding in parallel and committed to sharing his draft memorandum and the proposed letter of commitment with Sandra so their work could be coordinated.

Eric also arranged for a MassCEC representative to attend the upcoming SPS School Committee meeting to explain the advisory program and answer questions from School Committee members. **Olga** thanked Eric for the update and said she looked forward to reviewing his memorandum.

Action Item:

Eric and Sandra will prepare and distribute to ESC a draft memorandum and letter of commitment regarding school bus electrification.

7. Sustainability Coordinator Update

Eric provided an update on several ongoing sustainability initiatives. He reported that a meeting was scheduled with Weston & Sampson to discuss next steps for the climate change vulnerability assessment. The committee had previously approved spending up to an additional $10,000 for further data analysis using inland flooding model data provided by BFC Group. Although Weston & Sampson had originally requested $15,000, Eric had not received any immediate concerns regarding the committee's decision to limit the additional funding to $10,000. The upcoming meeting would focus on understanding how Weston & Sampson proposes to use the additional funds and determining how to move forward.

Eric also reported progress on the DEP municipal solid waste coordinator position that Sudbury will host. The position had been posted for approximately two weeks, and HR indicated that a healthy number of applications had been received. Sudbury will coordinate with DEP on the interview process and is expected to assist with reviewing and assessing candidates, although DEP will ultimately make the hiring decision.

Eric discussed continued work with John on collecting data for the decarbonization roadmap. **John** reported that he had obtained nearly all of the required school-related data, which had proven easier to gather than expected. Only a few details remained, such as confirming the BTU capacity of some elementary school stoves. The remaining challenge is obtaining DPW-related information, as staff availability has slowed progress. **Eric** noted that a potential summer intern could assist with organizing the collected information into the format required for submission to PowerOptions.

Work also continues on stakeholder engagement for a potential battery energy storage system (BESS) bylaw. **Eric** and **Venk** have already met with representatives from the Fire and Building Departments and are reaching out to Planning and Health officials to coordinate discussions with their respective boards. **Venk** is preparing a PowerPoint presentation that will summarize stakeholder feedback received to date.

Eric provided an update on the Climate Resilience Coaching 2.0 project, noting that the project received an extension and is moving forward. The pilot materials have been finalized, and the team will be coordinating dates for coaches to begin the summer pilot program.

Eric also described a new effort to reduce municipal electricity costs through peak demand notifications. Through MAPC, he receives daily updates indicating the likelihood of peak electricity demand events. Because demand charges can represent a significant portion of commercial electricity bills, Eric sent notifications to town department heads before the July 1–2 heat wave, when peak demand was expected. He encouraged departments to reduce energy usage during likely peak periods by avoiding EV charging, adjusting thermostats, using fans or natural ventilation, and taking other small conservation measures. He noted that even modest reductions could potentially save the town thousands of dollars. Eric received positive feedback from Sandra but no specific responses from other departments. He also emphasized that future installation of building management systems could provide greater automated control over energy use, rather than relying primarily on voluntary actions.

Finally, **Eric** reported that Sustainable Sudbury had connected him with a local college student interested in sustainability work over the summer. Potential assignments include helping organize the decarbonization roadmap data collected by John for submission to PowerOptions and possibly serving as a climate resilience coach to fill an open position. Eric was awaiting confirmation but hoped the student could provide additional support for committee initiatives during the summer.

Action Item:

Venk will prepare a PowerPoint presentation summarizing stakeholder feedback regarding the BESS bylaw.

8. ESC Strategy Select Board Presentation Prep

This agenda item was deferred to the next meeting.

9. Next Meeting

ESC members agreed to hold the next monthly meeting on Wednesday, August 12, 2026. Members agreed to subsequently finalize the August meeting date by email.

10. Conclusion of Meeting

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:14pm.

Submitted by: John Keklak