



New Jersey Energy Code Collaborative
Code Compliance and Workforce Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes

August 12, 2025, 4:00 – 5:00 PM

Attendees

- Brian Penschow, AIA
- Cathy Yuhas, NJEDA
- Carly McGovern, NEEP
- Cornelia Wu, NEEP
- David Hattis, Rutgers
- Dragana Thibault, NEEP
- Jason Kliwinski, Senior Energy Code Researcher for Rutgers
- Jennifer Senick, Rutgers
- Jennifer Souder, Rutgers
- Jeff Kolakowski, NJ Builders Association
- Jerry Flach, Rutgers
- Ian Rayfield, NJDCA
- Kiran Ghosh, Rutgers
- Matthew Kaplan, ReVireo
- Stacy Richardson, NJBPU
- Stephanie Staub, NJ Pathways
- Valerie Diaz, ASHRAE
- Yousaf Shahid, Rutgers

1. Introduction

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) welcomed everyone, introduced the core team, and asked attendees to add names and affiliations in the chat. Reminded the group that the Energy Code Collaborative website hosts past meeting transcripts and slide decks. Noted earlier transcripts had been circulated for comment and updated. Said the group would review what was heard last time and discuss next steps. Gave a brief antitrust reminder.

2. Discussion

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) explained that at the top of the meeting, she will recap what we have heard and learned from the discussion during the last meeting. She framed workforce challenges that were discussed at the last subcommittee meeting (non-competitive pay/benefits, limited training, low awareness). Something else that was also discussed is the baseline energy-knowledge requirements and gaps in the workforce, noting that energy-code training isn't mandatory and may need legislation, and the need to look into third-party enforcement models. Introduced action items for the Energy Code Collaborative to create streamlined pathways (review offerings, present on current programs, develop/modify



credentials, and market pathways) and asked for examples of transitioning from licensed professions into code-official roles.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) asked for updates on existing initiatives at community colleges/Heldrich, and whether expedited, community-college-based pathways could build on current offerings.

Stephanie Staub (NJ Council of County Colleges) said adjacent programs could be aligned but needs a clear statement of code-official requirements; noted private-industry pay makes early recruitment hard but entry-level alignments can create on-ramps.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) proposed combining licensure experts with educators to map skills/competencies and develop a detailed roadmap.

Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA) volunteered to help map requirements; he noted trade entrants often need community college coursework and said aligning visible pathways is a low-hanging fruit.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) thanked Brian, invited partners/reviewers, and asked people to sign up on the Padlet [link](#).

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) explained how to note interest on the shared Padlet and moved to recruitment/compensation.

Outlined enhancing recruitment and compensation by reviewing current pipelines (schools, unions, colleges), running awareness campaigns, and highlighting the sustainability impact of code-official careers to attract younger candidates.

Shared that Connecticut is creating an associate's degree for code officials and asked whether a degree or a defined set of classes could work in New Jersey.

Stephanie Staub (NJ Council of County Colleges) said whether to build a degree vs. certificate should follow from the skills/competency mapping and hiring requirements.

Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA) explained education/experience trade-offs in pathways (e.g., higher degrees can reduce required field experience) and stressed training can come via school or field.

Stephanie Staub (NJ Council of County Colleges) emphasized the importance of mapping.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) suggested Stephanie could "beta-test" curricula alignment once an initial map exists and called for a working group.

David Hattis (Rutgers) asked whether the focus is on all code officials or specifically energy-code enforcement.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) replied that the pathway discussion is general, with emphasis on energy, since many officials enforce multiple codes.



Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) noted several proposals are energy-oriented; said a standalone energy-only career is unlikely but allied, licensed professionals (e.g., NYC BPS) might perform inspections.

Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA) discussed compensation and capacity constraints tied to New Jersey's many jurisdictions; suggested decoupling salaries from permit-fee volumes and considering regionalization.

Jeff Kolakowski (NJ BA) reported a law now allows private inspections when municipal inspections are delayed, intended in part to create private-sector career pathways. He also described recent plan-review reforms permitting private plan review by design professionals for certain smaller renovation/rehab projects, and noted that DCA now has regulatory authority to expand the eligible scope.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) noted DCA participates in the Collaborative but no one could stay on this call.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) said Ian had dropped a link in chat to support the mapping effort.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) moved to expanding training/resources and leveraging technology (digital energy-code checklists, more training, a hotline, circuit riders), citing Massachusetts as precedent and noted the state subcontracts portions of energy-code education to Performance Systems Development (PSD), which provides checklists and forms used in the field.

Matthew Kaplan (ReVireo) pointed to Philadelphia's model where designated, credentialed professionals verify specific code aspects and where Department of Licenses and Inspections, working with PSD, created standardized checklists/forms. He suggested DCA could provide similar statewide tools even if enforcement remains municipal. He also cautioned that, even with robust tools, consistent enforcement still depends on local capacity and training.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) invited comments, then moved to strengthening energy-code understanding.

Proposed assessing current understanding and improving it through training, possibly with Sustainable Jersey.

Jeff Kolakowski (NJ BA) asked why train all officials if only some enforce energy; suggested focusing training where responsibility lies.

Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA) answered that systems are interconnected and the municipal code official (not every sub-inspector) should understand cross-system energy implications during plan/document review.

Jeff Kolakowski (NJ BA) agreed the head official needs that training.



Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA) said new training is needed and proposed adding an ICC energy-code exam to New Jersey code-official licensure; noted DCA controls requirements and ICC exams already exist.

Jeff Kolakowski (NJ BA) asked whether New Jersey largely uses ICC testing or NJ-specific materials.

Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA) said it's largely ICC (with a few exceptions) and the exams are demanding.

Jeff Kolakowski (NJ BA) asked about consistency between I-Codes and the National Standard Plumbing Code (NPC).

Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA) said code texts are usually reconciled each cycle; variation mostly comes from jurisdictional application and appeals.

Jeff Kolakowski (NJ BA) noted NPC is unusual nationally.

Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA) said officials need training on NPC oddities and that minimum energy-code literacy for officials would improve consistency.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) added that energy-code content should be included in continuing education.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) moved to exploring legislative/enforcement options, including mandatory energy-code training, and asked for best practices.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) proposed memorializing focus areas (mapping, other-jurisdiction practices, a minimum energy-subcode training plan) and drafting an implementation path.

Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA) urged prioritizing a concrete "ask," distinguishing what DCA can do administratively (e.g., add an exam) vs. what needs legislation (e.g., degree requirements).

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) agreed on prioritization, suggested a simple ranking process and starting with early wins.

Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA) suggested an early-win CEU session on energy-code importance at the annual Building Safety Conference in Atlantic City (early May).

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) supported the idea.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) and **Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA)** confirmed the timing (first/second week of May) and that the window gives time to prepare.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) and **Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA)** light exchange about awards and recognitions.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) began closing, noting follow-up with a transcript, list of topics, and a ranking survey.



David Hattis (Rutgers) flagged conflict-of-interest considerations if plan reviews expand further to third parties. As a guardrail example, Washington, DC permits third parties to perform plan reviews and inspections, but not on the same project, to avoid conflicts.

Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA) added that self-certification remains limited in practice and underscored ongoing capacity constraints (not enough inspectors/plan reviewers entering the market).

Jason Kliwinski (Senior Energy Code Researcher for Rutgers) added recent plan-review reforms permit private plan review by design professionals for certain smaller rehab/renovation projects and allow DCA to expand scope; acknowledged self-certification remains limited.

Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA) and **Jennifer Senick (Rutgers)** noted the pace of government change vs. business; brief exchange.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) closed the substantive discussion by endorsing an education-first track, calling for volunteers to develop a conference session, training opportunities, and requirements-to-courses mapping, using certificate models students can follow.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) announced NEEP's Heating Electrification Workshop in Princeton in October with a Day-Zero block on Monday, Oct 20, 1–4 p.m. for an in-person NJ Energy Code Collaborative meeting, with hybrid option being explored; said she will send a calendar hold and follow up with notes.

ZOOM Chat Discussion Notes

Dragana Thibault (NEEP): Guiding principles of the NJ ECC:

<https://njenergycodecollaborative.org/about/>

Transcript from previous subcommittee meeting:

https://njenergycodecollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2025-05-02-NJ-ECC-Code-Compliance-and-Workforce_meeting-notes.pdf

Padlet link for volunteers interested in supporting action steps:

<https://padlet.com/dthibault6/nj-ecc-code-compliance-workforce-subcommittee-volunteer-inte-q5h98dhorkukfblb>

Ian Rayfield (NJ DCA): I'm not able to stay for the meeting but I can provide the a link to a PDF containing the licensing information for inspectors and officials.

https://www.nj.gov/dca/codes/publications/pdf_licensing/licens_info_bklet.pdf

Matthew Kaplan (ReVireo): regionalization or privatization of energy code enforcement is indeed the only viable long term solution

To both Jennifer's and Brian's points



Philadelphia is a good model for privatization of enforcement ... even better than NYC, since NYC is overly reliant on licensed design professionals who may not possess the specific expertise - <https://www.phila.gov/departments/departments-of-licenses-and-inspections/resources/energy-code-compliance-materials/#/>

regionalization very viable option too... DE does it on a countywide basis (obviously a smaller state)

Jerry Flach (Rutgers): Planning Boards?

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIA – American Institute of Architects

ASHRAE – American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers

BPU (NJBPU) – New Jersey Board of Public Utilities

CEU – Continuing Education Unit

DCA (NJDCA) – New Jersey Department of Community Affairs

DC – District of Columbia

ICC – International Code Council

IECC – International Energy Conservation Code

NEEP – Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships

NJBA – New Jersey Builders Association

NJEDA – New Jersey Economic Development Authority

NPC – National Standard Plumbing Code

NYC – New York City

PSD – Performance Systems Development