New Jersey Energy Code Collaborative

Energy Code for New Construction Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes

August 12, 2025, 3:00 – 4:00 PM

Attendees

- Anne-Marie Peracchio, NJNG
- Arah Schuur, CUPR,
- Ben Adams, MaGrann
- Brian W. Penschow, AIA
- Cornelia Wu, NEEP
- Dean Potter, K Hovnanian
- David Hattis, Rutgers
- Dragana Thibault, NEEP
- Helaine Barr, NJDEP
- Jason Kliwinski, Senior Energy Code Researcher for Rutgers
- Jeff Kolakowski, NJBA
- Jennifer Souder, Rutgers
- Jennifer Senick, Rutgers
- Jerry Flach, Rutgers
- Karl Hartkopf, NJDEP
- Kiran Ghosh, Rutgers
- Liz Stanton (AEC)
- Mamie Purnell, NJ Div. of Rate Counsel
- Marie Daniels, NJ DCA
- Matthew Kaplan, ReVireo
- Maura Caroselli, NJ Division of Rate Counsel
- Nicholas Kikis, NJ Apartment Association
- Pam DeLosSantos, NJHMFA
- Rebecca Lynskey, TRC
- Stacy Richardson, NJBPU
- 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. Handed to DCA for a code adoption update.

2. NJ Energy Code Adoption Status

Marie Daniels (NJ DCA) explained that New Jersey is still waiting for approval to publish the 2024 National Model Codes in the New Jersey Register. Reported the package moved from the Attorney General's Office to the Governor's Office on July 8. Based on the Register schedule, the earliest proposal date is October 6, which is past the hoped-for September adoption.

Adoption now looks like early to mid-next year at the earliest. Explained that once the package leaves DCA's hands, timing is unpredictable—could be weeks or months.

3. Discussion

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) thanked Marie and asked for questions, then moved into the main content.

Cornelia recapped the last meeting's two main topics—code alignment and performance, and policy and infrastructure. One of the topics discussed during the last subcommittee meeting was whether existing incentives could be reorganized as a basis for a stretch code. Noted that concerns were raised during the last meeting about the lack of uniformity and predictability if municipalities pursue their own net-zero or stretch adoptions. Suggested next steps include compiling a list of above-code incentives and programs, assessing alignment with available codes, and recognizing that adopting stretch or net-zero may require legislation. On policy/infrastructure, said grid and policy limitations may impede affordable, realistic net-zero buildings and highlighted grid-capacity concerns for building decarbonization and EV charging. She added that a grid-capacity presentation would be scheduled, possibly at NEEP's Heating Electrification Workshop in October in Princeton (Hyatt on Route 1), with a Day Zero on Monday, October 20 and space to meet in person.

Stacy (Ho) Richardson (NJBPU) asked if there would be a virtual or hybrid option.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) said there's space for in-person participation and NEEP is checking technology for a hybrid option. A calendar hold for 1–4 pm on Monday, October 20 will be sent for the Day Zero in-person block. No conference fee will be required for collaborative sessions.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) asked if the Day Zero collaborative meetings would require a conference fee.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) said that part is free.

Cornelia continued with the presentation and proposed forming a working group to explore a stretch code. Said the responsible party would be the New Jersey Energy Code Collaborative; the objective is to establish clear performance standards aligned with state goals; actions include exploring how a stretch approach could help meet state energy/GHG master plan goals; next steps include determining a viable stretch approach. Invited sign-ups using the Padlet link. Asked for thoughts on topics and logistics (how often should the group meet). Listed work items for this working group that would include inventory stretch-code options, examine performance metrics, and identify characteristics of viable stretch codes. Invited thoughts and volunteers.

Jeff Kolakowski (NJBA) volunteered for the working group and reiterated that he believes New Jersey already has several stretch versions through incentives, pilots, EDA/HMFA requirements, code appendices enabling above-code, and BPU above-code incentives—so he wasn't sure what the group would be pushing for.

Jason Kliwinski (Senior Energy Code Researcher for Rutgers) replied that incentives are not a stretch code; they fund above-code outcomes, but an incentive isn't itself a code.

Jeff Kolakowski (NJBA) said there are mandatory above-code requirements in certain programs (EDA green standards, HMFA, municipal redevelopment agreements) that function like mandatory stretch in specific cases.

Jason Kliwinski (Senior Energy Code Researcher for Rutgers) said those are narrow cases and not a statewide stretch across sectors.

Jeff Kolakowski (NJBA) warned that if everyone is pushed above code, the above code becomes the new base, eliminating the baseline.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) acknowledged the variety of incentive-based programs and the resulting confusion. Suggested considering a clearly defined voluntary stretch code—examples include leveraging IECC 2024 appendices or adopting the next IECC version ahead to give the market early experience—with incentives aligned to it. Proposed focusing on what one voluntary stretch code should look like.

Jeff Kolakowski (NJBA) restated that NJ already has many voluntary above-code options (ICC appendices, BPU programs, Passive House, federal programs) and some mandatory in certain circumstances; worried that expansion to all projects eliminates the baseline.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) responded that if it's voluntary, it wouldn't eliminate the base.

Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA) advised avoiding a binary choice. Said a stretch should be aspirational and attainable, perhaps target ~20% efficiency improvement, using existing voluntary and some mandatory components to reach that goal with incentives aligned.

Jason Kliwinski (Senior Energy Code Researcher for Rutgers) said programs reference different standards (EDA vs BPU vs local redevelopment), creating inconsistency. Suggested a statewide stretch could provide one consistent language and allow agencies to align incentives around it.

Jeff Kolakowski (NJBA) said builders value program diversity. National builders prefer consistent national templates and might resist a NJ-specific approach.

Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA) said a stretch can retain flexibility through equivalencies (Passive House, LEED, Enterprise Green Communities, NAHB, ASHRAE 189/IgCC). Emphasized meeting performance goals rather than enforcing one brand of standard.

Dean Potter (K Hovnanian) proposed using a HERS/ERI target that's better than base, with an envelope backstop, to keep flexibility. Noted IECC 2024 expanded selectable options and 2027 will expand further. Suggested setting the NJ-2024 HERS equivalent and requiring, say, 10% better, making it simple, flexible, and reducing lobbying.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) said that aligns with prior conversations (e.g., green building manual) and could satisfy multiple perspectives.

Jason Kliwinski (Senior Energy Code Researcher for Rutgers) agreed that's a valid performance pathway.

Dean Potter (K Hovnanian) added performance targets help avoid manufacturer-driven prescriptive fights.

Brian W. Penschow (NJ AIA) cautioned many practitioners don't know how to meet a pure performance target; recommended offering some prescriptive options known to achieve it to reduce friction.

Dean Potter (K Hovnanian) replied that as we move toward net zero, prescriptive gets harder and risks favoring certain products; suggested a lighter prescriptive menu similar to IECC's approach rather than a heavy prescriptive pathway.

Ben Adams (MaGrann) clarified "voluntary" in Massachusetts means voluntary for a municipality to adopt but then mandatory within that municipality; in NJ, "voluntary" usually means project-by-project programs (e.g., Clean Energy Program). Said HERS can work but may miss some whole-building advantages embedded in proxy programs like ENERGY STAR; works fine as long as bundling prescriptive measures doesn't yield higher incentives than whole-building pathways.

Jeff Kolakowski (NJBA) asked about non-energy criteria (materials) used by green building systems.

Dean Potter (K Hovnanian) asked whether this is an energy initiative, a decarbonization initiative, or both; said they're different and approach differs.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) said first step is to inventory existing monetary incentives; some tie to LEED (materials) and others are energy-only, so the inventory will surface the metrics already in use.

Dean Potter (K Hovnanian) clarified LEED is a program, not itself an incentive, and asked to confirm "incentives" refers to money.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) confirmed that the reference is to monetary incentives.

Dean Potter (K Hovnanian) observed there are fewer incentives now than three months ago.

Matthew Kaplan (ReVireo) said there are no BPU incentives specifically for LEED; LEED can be a compliance pathway for EDA financing/tax credits, but those credits are for economic development, not for doing LEED per se. Summarized that many above-code programs, incentives, and financing mechanisms exist. Clarified that stretch codes are typically voluntary for municipalities to adopt and then mandatory locally; NJ currently doesn't allow municipalities to exceed the Uniform Construction Code, whereas New York does.

Ben Adams (MaGrann) underscored the voluntary distinction again and described NJ's residential incentive tiers—ENERGY STAR, Zero Energy Ready, Passive House—with higher incentives at higher performance. Said proxy programs embed non-energy criteria to avoid unintended consequences, but the cash incentives pay for energy savings; noted he was speaking mostly from the residential side and that LEED is a commercial pathway.

Nicholas Kikis (NJAA) said locally adopted stretch codes run counter to New Jersey's history of statewide uniformity and raised concerns that municipalities use regulations to hinder development (referenced Mount Laurel). Preferred repurposing "stretch code" to mean a voluntary, non-coercive concept oriented to developers/programs, not local mandates.

Matthew Kaplan (ReVireo) asked if a uniform, state-written stretch that municipalities could opt into (no bespoke local versions) would address those concerns; if not, suggested focusing on improving voluntary, incentive-based pathways like the Clean Energy Program.

Nicholas Kikis (NJAA) said there's one environment and one grid and questioned the need for different municipal policies; asked whether a state stretch wouldn't simply duplicate the UCC.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) noted differences among states—Massachusetts offers two state-written options (stretch and specialized) that municipalities can adopt without altering; New York allows specific local stretch codes (e.g., Ithaca). Said Massachusetts is more uniform than New York.

Jason Kliwinski (Senior Energy Code Researcher for Rutgers) reiterated NJ's legislative hurdle—one uniform statewide code, municipalities can't adopt anything else—so any stretch under current law would need to be a uniform option across all municipalities. Suggested focusing on what the stretch should contain. Clarified the group's scope is energy; decarbonization is broader (materials, transportation).

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) pointed again to the Padlet/QR for sign-ups, said a September remote kickoff is possible and that there's in-person time on October 20. Reiterated work items:

inventory incentives, consider performance metrics such as HERS, and weigh performance vs prescriptive paths.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) introduced a second working group on net-zero energy code adoption. Said the Collaborative would be responsible; the objective is to develop proposals for net-zero implementation (readiness, net zero at the stretch, net zero at the base) aligned with state energy/GHG goals. Next steps include developing specific implementation proposals, reviewing adoption mechanisms, legislative opportunities, and timeline. Invited sign-ups via the same Padlet.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) clarified these options came from the last meeting's transcript. Summarized that HERS looked like a promising performance metric; jurisdictional mechanics were unresolved for now. Said facilitators aren't predetermining policy; a working group could start with HERS, then address implementation and adoptability in New Jersey's context.

Matthew Kaplan (ReVireo) asked whether the intent is to design something tailored for legislative municipal opt-in or simply the best model regardless of constraints.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) said nothing is predetermined; implementation must be possible eventually, but towns can't adopt beyond UCC today except via mechanisms like redevelopment agreements. Municipalities could potentially incentivize a statewide stretch through negotiated outcomes. Recommended starting with what fits New Jersey context, then tackling adoptability.

Ben Adams (MaGrann) said if the outcome is voluntary, it's unclear why to pivot to HERS given the success of whole-building incentive programs.

Dean Potter (K Hovnanian) recommended establishing a clear end-state and timeline (e.g., net-zero or net-zero-ready by a certain year) and then working backward to define phased steps, rather than picking incremental % targets each cycle without a destination.

Jeff Kolakowski (NJBA) emphasized the cost and practicality of achieving additional savings beyond IECC 2024 (e.g., envelope/framing changes, HVAC). He questioned the marginal payback and flagged grid capacity, solar siting, heat-pump economics, and EV charging loads as constraints the working group should evaluate.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) referenced earlier Zero Energy Buildings Roadmap work that sized building-sector improvements to meet state policy goals and noted codes are a powerful tool among others.

Dean Potter (K Hovnanian) asked whether "net zero" means net-zero buildings or net-zero-ready requiring renewables. Said he builds net-zero-ready; the next step is renewables. Clarified that electrification is decarbonization (fuel switching), not energy savings. Explained current electrical load calculations oversize panels; emerging load-sharing may allow all-electric plus EV on a 200-amp panel, whereas current practice points to 300–400 amps, which would stress the

grid. Said technology needs to mature and be allowed in code; contractors hesitate to downsize without updated methods. Mentioned California brownouts and that Texas has significant solar (mostly farms), which affects the grid differently than rooftops.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) asked follow-ups on panels and load management; **Dean Potter** elaborated on redefining load calcs, allowing load management in code, and contractor comfort.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) asked whether net-zero-ready content that moved from base ICC to voluntary should be base in NJ, since some are doing it already. **Dean Potter** said not yet; the electric side must be addressed first.

Jeff Kolakowski (NJBA) asked if "net-zero-ready home" has a definition and whether it requires all-electric.

Dean Potter (K Hovnanian) said DOE defines it and it's not inherently all-electric; reiterated that all-electric relates to decarbonization, not directly to energy savings.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) suggested pointing people to the Zero Energy Buildings Roadmap for definitions.

Jeff Kolakowski (NJBA) asked whether 2024 IECC has caught up to DOE Zero Energy Ready. **Dean Potter** said no; 2024 IECC is roughly 8–10% more efficient than 2021, largely via equipment/feature trade-offs. Some prescriptive items (R-60 attics; R-20+5 walls) were relaxed as not economically viable; much of the gain comes from selecting high-efficiency HVAC, water heating, and other features.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) wrapped up, noting that NEEP will follow up with the transcript for comment, post slides to the website, and send links and calendar holds.

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/2025/07/2025-05-07-NJ-ECC-Energy-Codes-for-New-Construction_meeting-notes.pdf

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers): Thanks, Marie! To clarify, there will be a public comment period prior to code adoption, now perhaps early in the new year, yes?

> **Marie Daniels (NJ DCA):** Yes! Once we have a date for publication in the New Jersey Register, the 60 day public comment period will begin upon publication!

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers): Great! Thank you!

Dragana Thibault (NEEP): Padlet link to sign up for working groups: https://padlet.com/dthibault6/nj-ecc-energy-codes-for-new-construction-subcommittee-workin-gfqmoocyyq69a4te

Karl Hartkopf (NJ DEP): Like base code IECC 2021, Stretch IECC 2024?

I think the incentive based stretch codes are on a project by project basis by developer. A stretch would be adopted by a municipality. Is this accurate-ish?

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers): The incentive programs that I'm familiar with are for energy efficiency

Compliance pathways like LEED may mean that the developer takes other non energy points, but the funding is for energy outcomes

E.g., if clean energy incentives

Helaine Barr (NJDEP): MA also allows muni's to adopt stretch codes and in fact encourages it via funding.

Karl Hartkopf (NJ DEP): So we don't have a common definition of "Net Zero Ready"?

Dragana Thibault (NEEP): The current draft of the NJ ZEB Roadmap: https://njenergycodecollaborative.org/roadmap/

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
CUPR – Center for Urban Policy Research (Rutgers)
DCA – New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
DEP (NJDEP) – New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
DOE – U.S. Department of Energy
EDA – New Jersey Economic Development Authority
EV – Electric Vehicle
HERS/ERI – Home Energy Rating System / Energy Rating Index
ICC – International Code Council
IECC – International Energy Conservation Code
IgCC – International Green Construction Code
LEED – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
NEEP – Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships

NJAA – New Jersey Apartment Association
NJBA – New Jersey Builders Association
NJCEP – New Jersey Clean Energy Program
NJHMFA – New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency
TRC – TRC Companies
UCC – Uniform Construction Code
ZEB – Zero Energy Buildings
ZERH – Zero Energy Ready Homes